October insight meeting: How to increase your impact through digital funding

Introduction

The annual Charity Digital Skills Report found that the pandemic brought about a period of intense digital adaption and 82% of charities see digital as either a much greater or more of a priority as a result of the pandemic. Further, almost three quarters of charities (72%) are actively working towards progressing with digital through tools, skills, infrastructure, service delivery and more, which “is a positive indication of their digital ambitions on the road to recovery”.

However, there are barriers to digital progress - 4 in 10 (40%) charities need funding for devices, software, and infrastructure. This has risen from being the third to the most urgent challenge for them. As a result, the report argues that “digital needs to be funded more effectively across the sector to increase impact”.

For our October insight meeting, we were delighted to be joined by the authors of the [Charity Digital Skills Report](https://charitydigitalskills.co.uk/), the Zoe Amar and Nissa Ramsay who discussed how charities' digital funding and support needs are changing, and what they now need from funders. During the session we:

1. Learnt what charities are looking for when seeking funding for digital , how this fits into their wider support needs, and what this means for increasing your impact through digital funding
2. Heard from other funders about how they are currently funding digital, and the challenges and opportunities they face
3. Planned how to evolve your digital funding practice, and where you can go to for help in the future.

Charity Digital Skills report PowerPoint - <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1O2uvC7vMiIemTmQoK-4ktWAt4eoPCjcpUb4SvBdxy-I/edit?usp=sharing>

Report findings

*This year the report ran from March to July and they had 435 responses:*

* 64% were small organisations (under £1 m) and 38% were large
* It found that digital services are very common but not the norm
* 21% asked are creating in-house digital solutions
* The hybrid models here to stay
* Focus on digital is becoming increasingly important. 40% are creating a digital strategy and lots said they want to make progress with this. How we do it is a critical question
* Half of charities are offering online services and working digital into job descriptions
* Skills related to remote working are where charities are feeling more confident
* Mature digital skills are becoming more prominent, e.g. social media
* Digital fundraising skills are lacking as well as the ability to analyse data to fund services. These are very important skills for the sector.
* We need more digital leaderships skills – only 1 in 5 organisations provide buy in and support for digital/ two thirds have room for improvement
* A top barrier was investment in technology
* Digital skills are being taken a lot more seriously
* There is an inability to prioritise digital due to burnout
* Working out funds needed is complex due to uncertainty about the cost and whether to include ongoing costs
* There has been a huge increase in the number of funders saying there is scope to include digital in all funding

Funders pledge

* Clarify what you’ll fund
* Cover core digital costs
* Close the digital skills gap between large and small charities
* Review your application forms to ask relevant questions
* Enable flexibility and support user research
* Offer scope to apply for vital IT and core infrastructure upgrades
* Build capacity by funding people and skills development
* Offer additional support from experts
* Enable more open working and reusable, community-owned tech
* Undertake user research and grown your own digital skills
* A third say they need core staff/ someone to lead on digital development

Discussion

Evaluation skills when it comes to digital are pretty low

No one wants to hear that the results of digital can be quite a long game

You need to be clear about what you want to measure

The narrative is much more interesting than the statistics

Organisations that don’t have a digital strategy struggle to master online engagement

Charities don’t have the resource and capacity to invest in platforms

There is a potential partnership conversation around charities and digital companies

It’s difficult to have an idea of costs as technology changes all the time. Managing digital budgets is really challenging as you don’t have baseline data to compare. The more insight you can get from other organisations the better

Resources shared

Barking and Dagenham Giving: Building A Digital Platform For Community Engagement

<https://bdgiving.org.uk/news/bd-giving-notes-17-building-a-digital-platform-for-community-engagement/>

Community Tech

<https://www.powertochange.org.uk/news/why-community-organisations-need-community-tech/>

<https://www.powertochange.org.uk/news/community-tech-in-action/>

Costs of tech

<https://www.sidelabs.io/blog/how-much-does-it-cost-to-build-a-mobile-app>

<https://outlandish.com/blog/websites/how-much-does-a-website-cost/>

<https://www.sidelabs.org/projects>

Finding Agencies to deliver

<https://www.dovetail.network/>

Share on this group - <https://www.agenciesforgood.org/> by getting in touch with anyone who is on it