

## **Learning partner - invitation to tender**

### **Virgin Money Foundation's digital inclusion strategy**

#### **Executive Summary**

The Virgin Money Foundation is inviting tenders from parties interested in becoming our learning partner and evaluating the effectiveness of our new digital inclusion strategy, which launched in February 2024.

Through the strategy, the impact we hope to achieve in the communities we fund is that people no longer experience digital poverty. They are able to access online services and opportunities resulting in educational, financial, social or health and wellbeing benefits.

The strategy currently encompasses three programme strands:

1. Building Digital Skills Fund
2. Volunteer and Connect Fund
3. Digital Champions programme

#### **Background**

The Virgin Money Foundation launched in August 2015 as an independent charitable foundation focused initially on community projects in the North-East of England. The Foundation supports local people to deliver positive change in the communities in which it is needed the most, investing at neighbourhood level. Since 2020 the Foundation has also funded organisations across the city of Glasgow.

The Foundation is funded through an annual donation from Virgin Money. The work the Foundation is undertaking in its current strategy compliments the banks own ESG ambitions of enabling people to gain digital access and skills to better manage their finances.

[www.virginmoneyfoundation.org.uk](http://www.virginmoneyfoundation.org.uk)

#### **Key features of the programmes**

##### **Building Digital Skills**

The North-East of England and Scotland are two of the areas in the UK facing the highest levels of digital poverty. Over the past five years, the Foundation has funded community anchor organisations working at a neighbourhood level in communities at the top of the Index of Multiple Deprivation / Scottish Index of deprivation. Community Anchors are well placed to, or already are, responding to digital poverty.

Our new grants programme provides Community Anchor organisations with a grant of up to £100,000 over a period of up to three years to tackle digital poverty. Applications to this fund are by invitation only.

The Building Digital Skills Fund will support work that enables everyone to become digitally included:

- having the skills and confidence to go on-line,

- having access to affordable data and broadband,
- and having access to the right equipment.

To date we have assessed applications with a total value of over £2,200,000, 17 have been approved by Board. We anticipate those 17 grants will benefit over 8,000 people. This will grow over the lifetime of the programme.

In Glasgow, the Building Digital Skills Fund is run in partnership with the HFD Charitable Foundation. More information can be found here: [www.hfdgroup.com/charitable-foundation](http://www.hfdgroup.com/charitable-foundation)

### Volunteer and Connect Fund

Digital Poverty does not only affect adults; 20% of children in the UK live in digital poverty too<sup>1</sup>. We want to change this by providing support to children so that they become digitally confident.

The Volunteer and Connect Fund builds on the volunteering already carried out by Virgin Money staff within local schools by offering a grant of up to £2,000 for these schools to help tackle digital poverty. From kit to lend out to families facing digital poverty, to new software and digital skills training, the grants will work to build the digital confidence of young people around the UK.

Since launch, we have awarded almost 80 grants which expect to impact almost 13,000 children.

### Digital Champions

A new volunteering programme for Virgin Money staff to support their community to build their digital confidence. Virgin Money staff are being trained as digital champions and are supported to go into their local foodbank and other local charitable organisations to assist people with their immediate digital needs. Laptops are donated by the Foundation alongside the colleague support. Foodbanks work with people in need right across the UK. Once through the door, food bank customers often present a broad range of needs in addition to the immediate requirement for food items.

### Under development

Alongside the three programmes detailed above the Foundation's strategy points to two further areas of work that the Foundation will consider developing to complement its three core programmes:

- Funding policy focused work that tackles digital poverty
- Developing a digital badge initiative recognising the new digital skills people gain.

### **The Tender**

We want the appointed learning partner to help us to test our existing thinking, evaluate the effectiveness of the three programmes in real time and look at what we can do to improve

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<sup>1</sup> Digital Poverty Alliance

and change our strategy into year three and beyond to best support our communities to become digital included.

We initially intend to appoint for a two-year term with the potential to extend beyond this time.

In the first year we want our partner to support us to:

- Further develop our Theory of Change, including a workshop with the Foundation team, Board members, Virgin Money colleagues, existing grant holders and funding partners,
- Test our assumptions on the existing Building Digital Skills outcomes and further develop our reporting framework,
- Support us to develop a strategy wide reporting framework,
- Complete a desk review of comparative programmes and potential regional and national partners,
- Provide an initial insights report for the first year of funding in September 2025,
- Review if our strategy as it currently stands will be effective in reducing digital poverty,
- Present to the Foundation Board of Trustees.

We will review and agree a work plan for year two in year one. At this stage we know we would like our learning partner to:

- Provide a second insights report at the 18-month point in March 2026,
- Complete a desk review using open data to look at the impact of grantee outcomes in reducing digital poverty alongside the Foundation being able to evidence their activity is reaching those most in need (this could be IMD or specific data on digital poverty),
- Provide a real time evaluation and a report on the effectiveness of the three programme strands and their connectiveness by the end of year two – September 2026,
- Workshop, with Board and partners, any changes required to our Theory of Change and strategy to ensure we have the greatest impact.

The tender should include:

Your tender should be no more than 10 pages long (not including the budget) and no smaller than 11pt. We have suggested page lengths below:

- a detailed outline of your proposed process – maximum four pages
- how the insight and evaluation reports will be presented – maximum one page
- your experience of evaluating similar programmes – maximum three pages
- CVs of the key personnel involved in the evaluation – maximum two pages
- a budget.

The tender should provide a detailed breakdown of all relevant costs within the available budget of £60,000 (inclusive of VAT) over two years. This does not need to be an equal split of £30,000 per year.

There is the potential to extend the evaluation further. A decision on this will be made in September 2026. We expect the proposals to use the available budget in full; proposals will be scored on quality alone.

## Timescales

**The delivery organisation will be recruited in September 2024. Tender proposals should be submitted by Friday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2024 at 12 noon.**

The partnership will then run to September 2026 with the potential to extend beyond this time. You will work with the Foundation team and Board, HFD Charitable Foundation team, Virgin Money Purpose team, Foundation grant recipients and partners.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the proposal in more detail please contact Rachel Kyle-Barclay, Grants and Learning Manager, [rachel.kyle-barclay@virginmoney.com](mailto:rachel.kyle-barclay@virginmoney.com) or Nancy Doyle-Hall, Executive Director [nancy.doyle-hall@virginmoney.com](mailto:nancy.doyle-hall@virginmoney.com) who will be very happy to speak to you further.

**Tenders should be sent to [info@virginmoneyfoundation.org.uk](mailto:info@virginmoneyfoundation.org.uk) by Friday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2024 at 12 noon.**

### Documents available on request

- Current working strategy
- Building Digital Skills Fund guidance