

# Accelerating Digital

Learning from a digital inclusion  
accelerator programme

*A report by Revealing Reality for the Carnegie UK Trust*

The Carnegie UK Trust commissioned Revealing Reality to undertake an independent evaluation of the #NotWithoutMe Accelerator programme to explore the relative merits and considerations of this approach to supporting organisations to deliver more effective projects.

## Acknowledgements from the Carnegie UK Trust

First and foremost, we want to thank all the project teams, their organisations and the young people who were engaged as part of the #NotWithoutMe Accelerator, we are hugely grateful for your positivity, trust and commitment to this process. To our Advisory Group for their guidance and support throughout the development and delivery of the programme and to all our facilitators for their contribution in creating a vibrant learning environment.

A considerable thanks also goes to Cliff Manning for his invaluable knowledge and passion for this project in his role as Carnegie Associate, to Rebecca Munro for overseeing all of the logistics to enable the #NotWithoutMe Accelerator to run smoothly and to Gina Wilson for her enthusiasm and leadership in establishing the programme.

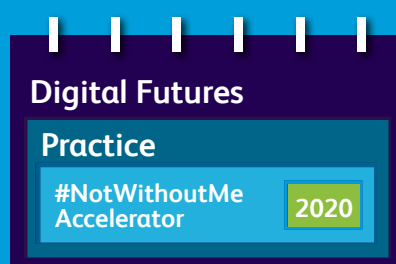
A final big thank you to Joe, Ruby, Damon and the Revealing Reality team for their time and thought in delivering this reflective research.

## #NotWithoutMe Accelerator Advisory Group

- Douglas White, Head of Advocacy, Carnegie UK Trust (Chair of the Advisory Group)
- Anna Grant, Senior Policy and Development Officer, Carnegie UK Trust
- (#NotWithoutMe Programme Lead)
- Cliff Manning, Carnegie Associate, Carnegie UK Trust and Research and Development Director, Parent Zone
- Sally Dyson, Head of Digital and Programmes, SCVO
- Chris Ashworth, Head of Public Benefit, Nominet
- Mezz Lewis, Assistant Director of Voice and Influence, Barnardos
- Kirsten Naude, New Ventures Director, The Children's Society
- Ian Power, Executive Director, SpunOut.ie
- Colette Slevin, Head of Children, Young People and Families, Mencap
- Avi Gillis, formerly Head of Tech Diversity & Digital Inclusion Policy, DCMS

Report written by Joe Cryer, Revealing Reality

Reviewed for the Trust by Anna Grant, Douglas White and Cliff Manning



# Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
What do we mean by an 'Accelerator' programme?	5
Aim for this report	6
Background & programme aims:	8
Designing for competing programme outcomes	9
Introduction to the #NotWithoutMe Accelerator participants	10
<b>Participant factors</b>	<b>13</b>
The people	13
Organisational factors	17
Motivations for participation	20
<b>Programme factors</b>	<b>22</b>
Making connections / networking	22
Location	24
Availability of funding	26
Engaging young people in the development process	27
Funder support	27
Learning opportunities	28
<b>Summary considerations</b>	<b>32</b>

# Foreword

2020 has reaffirmed both the vital role that the third sector plays in supporting the public through the most challenging of times, and the deep and growing reliance we have on technology in almost every aspect of our lives.

Since the outbreak of Covid-19 more people than ever before have been dependent on access to devices and connectivity in order to work from home, complete school lessons or socialise. Alongside the kit, many people also need guidance and support to make use of digital productively and safely. This year, we have seen a particular awakening in the realisation that many young people also need support to be online effectively.

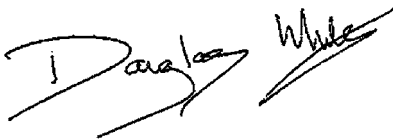
Digital inclusion is not a new issue, but becoming ever more pressing, we need trusted organisations with well-established relationships with those who they support to deliver this work. From libraries to football clubs, the third sector and public services have demonstrated their value in delivering this digital inclusion support. They have done this up and down the country in engaging and effective ways, despite both the obvious and unseen hurdles.

However, it is not enough just to celebrate and thank these organisations for their work. We need to collectively recognise we must support capacity building within the sector, to renew the commitment to digital services and support of the highest quality, while recognising that this takes time and additional resource.

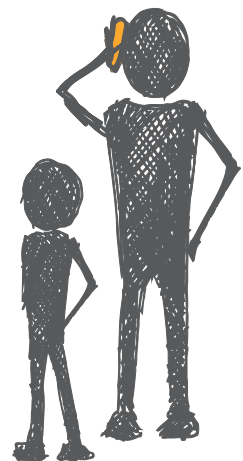
How best to support organisations through a mix of financial, intellectual and social capital is a continued area of interest and evolution.

Two years ago, we launched the #NotWithoutMe Accelerator to create opportunities for different types of organisations to experiment, explore and learn about delivering digital inclusion support, specifically with young people. Through a series of structured activities conducted over several months, we wanted to understand how to better build both staff and organisation capacity in the digital space. Our ambition was to collectively create an open, asset-based and transparent culture of consistent learning for the participants, staff and facilitators involved.

We have been delighted to work with Revealing Reality to undertake this evaluation of the #NotWithoutMe Accelerator programme and its subsequent impacts. We wanted to set these learnings in the wider context of organisational development in the third sector. In that vein we hope this report will provide valuable insights for future development and capacity building in the sector, across a wide range of relevant issues.



**Douglas White**  
Head of Advocacy  
Carnegie UK Trust



# Executive summary

## Who is this report for?

This report is intended to act as a resource for any individual – or any organisation – with an interest in building capacity in their sector to improve outcomes for users and organisations. While the learning stems primarily from Carnegie’s #NotWithoutMe accelerator programme, we hope it provides useful insight and a range of considerations relevant to any capacity-building work.

## What does it cover?

This report is not intended to act as a step-by-step guide to developing similar types of programme, but to highlight and explore a range of factors that organisations may find useful to consider in their own work. The factors we explore cover people, organisations, and how a programme could be designed, but this is not an exhaustive list.

There is a balance in any accelerator between how much is defined prior to the start of the programme (informed by sector insight and needs) versus being left open to being formed once participants have been selected. This report does not prescribe what balance is most appropriate in any given context. Instead we have tried to identify and explore some aspects of each approach that are worth consideration. Ultimately, what a programme looks like must come down to the project’s aims, and the capacity and resources available to the sponsor to provide a tailored approach.

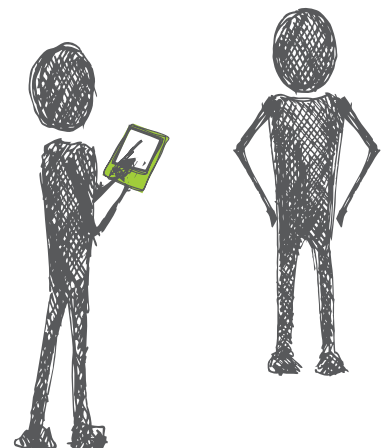
## Key features of a successful programme

A successful accelerator, much like any programme, requires the right combination of the following three elements:

1. Defined aims and objectives that are clear to participants and which the funder can effectively evaluate.
2. Participating organisations and individuals who are committed to the process and are able, with the right input and support, to achieve the short- and long-term goals of the programme.
3. A programme designed to get the most out of those committed participants.

The programme’s goals should heavily inform who participates. In turn, knowing the needs, attributes, capabilities of the participants, and the goals of the programme, the organiser will be able to design the programme specifically to support their chosen participants to make the programme a success<sup>1</sup>.

- 1 Other approaches to programme design might flex more or less around participants. For instance, a programme’s aims could be based entirely on the participants, who may also be pre-determined. Or the aims and approach could be completely fixed, with participants required to work around these as best as possible. All are viable, but this report focusses on the approach outlined above.



## Design the programme to enable participants to gain maximum benefit

The individual people participating are likely to be the most important single factor in determining whether a programme will achieve its intended outcomes in creating quality projects and developing capacity within the sector. Accelerators, or any programmes that focus on development rather than provision of services (e.g. funding only), are so often investments in people. Therefore, it is vital to consider *who* and how we identify the people and organisations that will gain the most. There is no set formula, but there are attributes that organisations or people might have that can be considered.

For participating organisations for instance, characteristics such as how they are funded, their strategic priorities, closeness to the topic area and motivations for engaging with the programme are likely to all play some role in how they engage with a programme, and what benefits they take away.

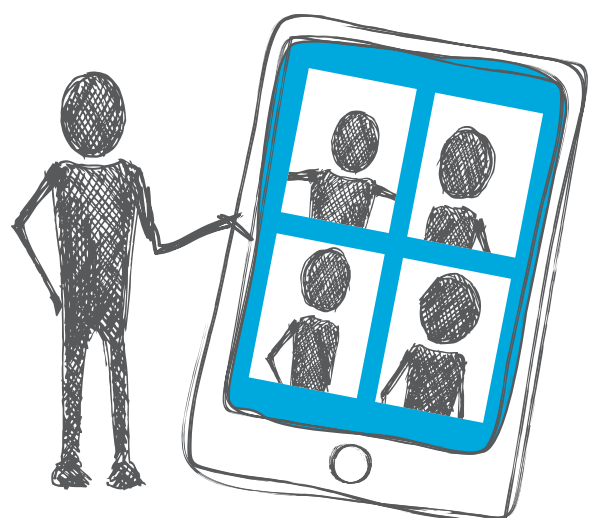
Alongside this, there are also more personal characteristics that can be taken into account. Here we explore a range of areas such as seniority of role; decision-making power; how much influence someone has within their organisation and sector more generally; someone's ability to share and embed learning; and commitment to the programme – including simply someone's capacity and time to participate – among others. Depending on the objectives of the programme, not all of these things are necessarily important. However, anyone designing a programme should be aware of how they could influence the project.

To make the most of the skills, attributes and experience of the participating organisations and individuals, the programme itself must be designed to provide the right level of support, challenge and flexibility to adapt to those involved. We discuss a range of elements that featured in the #NotWithoutMe programme, but there are no doubt others to consider.

Learning from the Carnegie programme suggests there are two broad considerations that should form part of the design process:

- What is controllable, and what is not? Some elements, such as the commitment of participating organisations, are not necessarily within the control of the organiser or participant. Although the selection process, for example, could be used to test this early on. It is important for the funding organisation to be aware of what is and is not within their control, whether these are elements of the programme or related outcomes. This way, the outcomes can be judged against what was intended.
- What is the right combination of features for a programme? Some elements are complimentary, while others may clash or work towards different outcomes. Knowing what trade-offs are being made is important.

This report covers the following areas that were important in designing the #NotWithoutMe accelerator: building relationships and networking; location of the programme; building in project/idea development time; the role of funding; the scope of support from the funder; and learning opportunities for participants. Understanding how these elements interrelate, what outcomes you could expect from each, and where there are tensions between them hopefully provides a useful starting point for thinking about programme design.



# Introduction

## What do we mean by an 'Accelerator' programme?

Among funding organisations there is a general trend towards programmes that are designed to foster development – rather than just run or maintain services – as this is increasingly being seen as a worthwhile investment towards achieving an organisation's objectives. An accelerator programme has this idea of development at its core.

The primary objective of an accelerator programme is to speed up start-up development through a combination of financial support, guidance and/or training.

An accelerator usually follows a similar format in which a host organisation provides a small amount of seed funding to a cohort of organisations, alongside a programme of development workshops on various relevant topics, mentoring and networking opportunities (most often seen in the tech sector). This is generally structured over a short time span of 3-6 months. Accelerator participants are usually measured on their financial returns, though this can vary. For example, impact accelerators focus on the 'social or environmental benefit' produced by an organisation.

The #NotWithoutMe accelerator was, in this sense, not a traditional accelerator programme. But it did draw on many of the key principles and approaches employed in other sectors, as well as including topics such as leadership, incubation of ideas and projects, project management etc. An overall learning from the process was, therefore, how applicable these can be when taken into the third sector and applied to the development of a specific project, as opposed to being applied to businesses.

## Other accelerator resources

The Carnegie team drew on learning and resources from other sectors and organisations in designing the #NotWithoutMe programme, some of which are outlined here for reference. Please note this is not an exhaustive list.

NESTA toolkit on how to create a traditional tech investment accelerator, providing a number of useful case studies and examples: [https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/startup\\_accelerator\\_programmes\\_practice\\_guide.pdf](https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/startup_accelerator_programmes_practice_guide.pdf)

Context on accelerator and incubator programmes in the UK from Wayra: <http://cdn.news.o2.co.uk.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Start-up-programme-report.pdf>

From a digital perspective, programmes like the Social Tech Trust Digital Research provide a valuable overview: <https://socialtechtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/SME834-Digital-Reach-Insights-report-FINAL.pdf>



## Aim for this report

This report is intended to act as a resource and reference point for any individual – or any organisation – with an interest in building capacity in their sector, particularly in an intensive manner over a relatively short time frame. We hope the learning in this report is not only relevant to organisations who are already developing, or considering running, their own accelerator-style programme, but to anyone wishing to invest in the development of people and organisations as part of a wider programme aimed at achieving better outcomes.

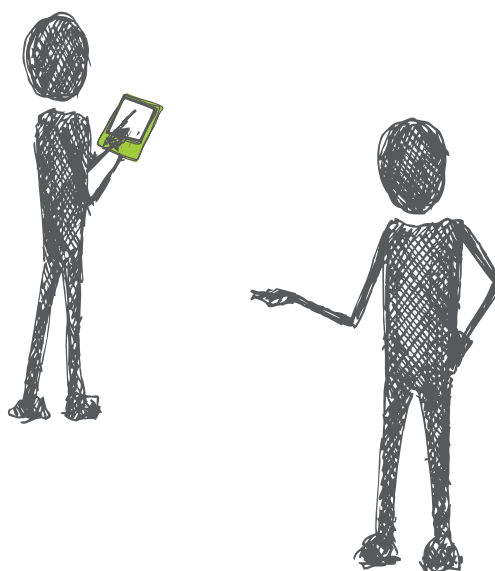
For Carnegie, as for many organisations considering developing similar types of programme, an accelerator-style programme presents new opportunities. At the same time, although the #NotWithoutMe programme drew on similar experiences of developing programmes such as Library Lab – a programme aimed at supporting and developing innovation and leadership in the public library sector – there was no guarantee how well this approach would translate from the tech and start-up sector. The #NotWithoutMe accelerator was, therefore, an important learning opportunity for Carnegie as well as the participants, and this report is intended to share that learning as widely as possible.

As digital becomes the norm, the implications of a potential digital divide in an already unequal society increase. There is a risk that those who are digitally excluded are left behind and are unable to benefit from the same opportunities as those who are digitally skilled and engaged. As such, organisations whose overarching aim is to improve people's wellbeing are increasingly taking account of digital inclusion alongside other 'traditional' wellbeing issues. Carnegie's contribution to this work – and the intention behind the accelerator – is to provide organisations with the best chance to develop successful, effective initiatives in this area. Not just through funding, but through building long-term capacity among those vital organisations working on the ground with young people who may experience increased vulnerability and at risk of digital exclusion.

The #NotWithoutMe accelerator was created to provide organisations, and individuals, with the knowledge and skills to plan, develop and improve their digital inclusion projects. This focus on capacity-building – improving the ability of a sector to respond to the needs of the people they are helping through the development of their organisations, offer and engagement – provided Carnegie with a way to build sustainable, long-term change, rather than only supply discrete funding pots.

This report focusses on bringing to the fore many of the factors that ought to be feasibly considered in designing such a programme, demonstrating the different ways these elements can be used, and what related outcomes could be reasonably expected by employing them in different ways. Beyond the design of the programme itself, this report aims to highlight a range of factors that appear to be so important in designing a successful programme. This includes understanding what kind of organisations and individuals are going to be involved; the factors that determine how and why they engage with programmes; and some of the organisational and other attributes that influence their motivations and aims.

What became incredibly clear through conversations with participants and the Carnegie team is that the outcome and success of this accelerator is fundamentally tied to the participants themselves, a central consideration that needs to be acknowledged in designing any programme.





## **A note on the approach to writing this report...**

This report is not intended to be an evaluation of how well each participating organisation ran their own specific project or engaged in the wider process, but of the programme model employed by the Carnegie team. This project was Carnegie's contribution to meeting some of their wider aims around building capacity and awareness around what makes effective digital inclusion projects. As such, this exercise was intended from the beginning to be something for others to learn from and build on. While comparatively small compared to other established accelerator programmes, this programme represented a substantial investment from the Carnegie team, particularly in terms of staff time. Learning as much as possible from this exercise was incredibly important, and this write-up itself is therefore an important part of the #NotWithoutMe accelerator programme.

Revealing Reality were commissioned as independent evaluators of the programme to help identify and share relevant learning for other organisations or funders who are considering running an accelerator-style funding programme. It is important to note that our specific aim was to understand the role of the programme itself and the participants in achieving the programme's goals, and not to conduct an evaluation into outcomes for end users. The evaluation was largely retrospective, gathering reflections on people's experience after the fact.

The evaluation included:

- Interviews with Carnegie staff to understand challenges and successes in the delivery of the programme and the underlying aims and intentions.
- Interviews with each of the participating organisations approximately 3 months after the end of the accelerator to understand how they had found the experience and their key takeaways from the different elements of the programme.
- Longer-term follow-up interviews with the accelerator participants approximately 9 months after the end of the accelerator to understand whether there had been any longer-term impacts of influences on their work.
- Interviews with the participating organisations from the original #NotWithoutMe pilot funding programme, to understand longer-term outcomes from that and act as a point of comparison with the accelerator.
- A visit to the fully funded project resulting from the accelerator and a small number of short interviews over the course of the programme funding.

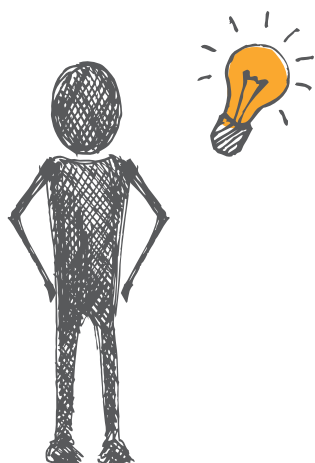
## Background & programme aims

In 2016 Carnegie UK Trust ran a pilot grant funding programme called #NotWithoutMe, supporting four organisations who work with young people to develop and run digital inclusion projects. While a core element of the programme was to use Carnegie funding to run the proposed projects, there was also a focus on learning and sharing knowledge and experiences with the wider sector. The projects focussed on young people specifically, aiming to tackle the sometimes poorly acknowledged issue of young people growing up without the basic digital skills that many consider come naturally to those growing up with smartphones and the internet.

A full report detailing the projects and learning from running the pilot programme can be found [here](#)<sup>2</sup>. The learning and recommendations from this informed the design of the #NotWithoutMe accelerator which this report discusses in detail.

Building on the learning from running the #NotWithoutMe pilot programme, Carnegie wanted to design a different learning and funding model to address some of the challenges and missed opportunities raised in the previous programme. The accelerator also had a stronger focus on building organisational capacity, with the long-term intention that this will in time lead to better outcomes for users.

<sup>2</sup> Full details and the previous report “A digital world for all” can be found on the Carnegie UK Trust website at <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/project/notwithoutme/>



Carnegie outlined the principles sitting behind this new accelerator programme as follows:

“When delivering the first phase of #NotWithoutMe we found that the pilot projects needed an extended amount of time at the start of the programme to plan and establish their projects before they could begin direct delivery. We have established the #NotWithoutMe accelerator to give organisations this time and knowledge to build the most effective solutions, and include young people in this process. In addition, we want to grow the capacity within the successful organisations to deliver these projects by providing a range of learning and development opportunities for the practitioners involved.

The aim of the #NotWithoutMe accelerator is to support the development of a small number of projects that are grounded in evidence, user insight and evaluative measures and are able to move towards effective implementation at the end of the #NotWithoutMe accelerator.”

(CARNEGIE #NOTWITHOUTME  
ACCELERATOR TEAM)

The programme had both short and longer-term goals. To develop workable projects and deliver positive outcomes for users; and to develop the capacity of the sector to raise the profile and quality of this kind of work longer-term. These goals, and the goals of any programme, necessarily inform the design of the programme. Put simply, what an organisation wants to change determines what the programme looks like.

The design of the #NotWithoutMe accelerator was intended to achieve the above aims. To do so, it was designed with several key components in mind:

- **An accelerator-style approach:** a 6-month long intensive programme in which participants are specifically provided with resources and dedicated time to develop and test a proposed digital inclusion project.

- **Workshops and training for participants:** sharing and increasing knowledge around some key areas including the broader issue of digital inclusion; practical guidance on evaluation and other relevant topics; and opportunities to develop initial proposals.
- **Funding for one of the participants to run a full project:** following the completion of the accelerator programme, and a competitive pitching process, one participant received funding to run their proposed project.
- **Ongoing support from Carnegie team:** throughout the project members of the Carnegie team were available to provide additional advice and support, and answer questions from participants, particularly in relation to each workshop.

These key components were designed into the process specifically to address certain needs of the work. It is important to note that this list of considerations and programme design features is not exhaustive. There are other things that could have been considered or included in the design of the programme, as well as other features that were not necessarily intentional design features, but unintended outcomes.

The programme also made use of an advisory group. This panel of internal and external experts represented tech, inclusion and youth participation sectors, and came from across the UK and Ireland. They formed the initial selection panel at the beginning of the programme, lent their expertise to the development and delivery of the workshops, and were part of the panel choosing the organisation who would receive the full project funding. This group was set up in part to provide a level of challenge to the core Carnegie team's thinking and provide different perspectives.

## Designing for competing programme outcomes

Participating organisations reported a wide range of impacts and outcomes, both for organisations generally and for individuals. Below we have summarised these outcomes, and whether they were primary or secondary outcomes. Those labelled 'Primary' outcomes were outcomes the participants reported that directly related to the design of the accelerator. Those labelled 'Secondary' were considered by the participants to be beneficial, but not necessarily accounted for in how the programme was designed.

Area	Outcome	Primary or Secondary
<b>Digital inclusion</b>	Understanding of digital inclusion	Primary
	Implementation of digital inclusion more widely in their work	Primary
	Wider learning around digital inclusion debate	Primary
<b>Project development</b>	Time and space to develop / improve project ideas	Primary
	Learning from projects (e.g. on youth engagement, digital skills)	Primary
	Continuation of projects/programmes developed for the funding programme	Secondary
<b>Practical skills</b>	Learning and practice/experience around bid writing and funding proposals	Secondary
	Project relevant skills and knowledge (e.g. evaluation)	Primary
	Personal skills development	Secondary
<b>Organisational impacts</b>	New or re-appraised approaches within their wider work	Secondary
	New ideas for long-term / strategic approach within organisation	Secondary
	Contacts and networks with relevant/supporting organisations	Secondary

What all of the factors and experiences identified demonstrate is that it will always be a balancing act. There are always compromises that will need to be made, so recognising that not all outcomes are compatible, and what compromises are being made, is important. This also does not mean a programme's outcomes are, or are not, the 'right' ones. What is important is whether the design of the programme adequately reflects the intended outcomes.

A simple example of outcomes in tension with each other that surfaced on this accelerator can be seen in the geographical spread of participants. The programme could not be expected to build greater connections between organisations and improve localised capacity (e.g. specifically in the East of England), while also ensuring the programme covered a wide geographic spread. Therefore, there was an active choice to pursue variation over local capacity on the part of the Carnegie team.

A defining feature of an accelerator-style programme is the comparatively intensive nature of the whole programme. It requires an ongoing commitment from participants outside the development and running of a particular project. Compared to programmes in which a project is funded outright, a programme like this ultimately needs to be seen as an investment by the participants.

One question raised by this different approach is whether this fosters better connections between participants than other types of programme. Does it feel like a shared endeavour, and does this lead to better outcomes? This is a difficult question to answer directly, as it relates to many different aspects of the accelerator and appropriate comparison programmes. What we can highlight are what a number of these factors are, and how the way they were approached in the design of this programme contributed, or not, to the programme outcomes.



# #NotWithoutMe Accelerator workshops



## Introduction to the #NotWithoutMe Accelerator participants

Below we have given a brief introduction to the participating organisations and outlined their initial proposed digital inclusion project and the final proposed project following development over the course of the accelerator.



### Rural Media

Rural Media is a Hereford-based media charity producing award-winning films and digital arts projects. Founded over 25 years ago, they tell powerful stories from unheard voices and aim to nurture creative talent and bring positive change through participation, education and creativity. Rural Media work with communities, schools, groups and individuals to create issue-driven films, heritage and digital arts projects that raise awareness, influence change and celebrate rural life. One of their core projects is Travellers' Times, a national platform for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community across the UK.

**Initial proposed project:** a series of 2-day workshops for young gypsies and travellers focussing on creating User-Generated Digital Content, run with partner organisations across the country, with an Online Digital Distribution Strategy using beneficiary-produced content, and support running a beneficiary-led social media campaign.

**Final proposed project:** deliver a series of 4-day vlogging workshops with young Gypsy, Roma and Travellers, teaching practical skills for content generation, as well as emotional resilience and coping strategies to deal with online hate.



### ProMo-Cymru

ProMo-Cymru works to ensure young people and communities are informed, engaged, connected and heard.

ProMo works with communities through communications, advocacy, cultural engagement, digital and media production. Our work is informed by over 20 years of delivering digital youth information projects. ProMo share this knowledge through training and consultancy, forming long term partnerships to benefit people and organisations. ProMo is a registered charity and social enterprise; with profits invested back into community projects.

**Initial proposed project:** working with young people to create an 'Escape Rooms' experience that encourages the creative development of digital skills, supporting users to learn about and understand their rights and how to access information and services digitally.

**Final proposed project:** work with 'young mums' and under-16s engaged with current local services to better enable them to search for and access information online – a key challenge identified from engaging with the relevant groups as part of the accelerator programme. Both groups would create an 'escape room' which will focus on how to find information online. The escape rooms would be tested, refined and rolled out for use with other relevant groups of young people.



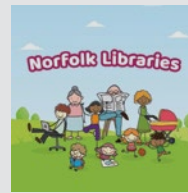
**TOWER HAMLETS**

### Tower Hamlets Young People's Advice Centre

The Young People's Advice Centre was set up in 2014 as a response to the Children and Families Act and SEND reforms 2014. The service provides information advice and support to young people, up to the age of 25, with additional needs. The service also supported a group of young people who originally took part in a peer research project to set up a youth forum for young people with additional needs: Our Time All Ability Youth Forum, which works on a range of projects focussing on youth engagement.

**Initial proposed project:** upskill young people to become digital researchers to explore the barriers and strengths that young people face/possess and develop a project that will build on young people's existing digital skills.

**Final proposed project:** run workshops with youth forum to develop digital games/resources around the topics identified as the biggest concern for young people during the youth engagement element of the accelerator – employment, independent living, friends, relationships, community and health. The game(s) would be tested with young people in schools and colleges, with peer researchers feeding back into development of the resource. Participants would be supported to raise awareness of the programme and share learning.



**Norfolk**  
County Council

### Norfolk Library and Information Services

Norfolk Library and Information Services has 47 libraries and 8 mobile libraries, serving a largely rural population of nearly 900,000 people across the 2,000 square miles of Norfolk. The Library and Information Services aims align closely with those of the wider Norfolk County Council, and their core purpose is promoting literacy, providing information for life, encouraging lifelong learning and supporting the wellbeing of communities. The Libraries team delivers a wide range of activities aimed at people of all ages, aiming to enable people to live independent, fulfilling lives and reach their potential.

**Initial proposed project:** develop a digital programme for Looked After Children, care leavers and their support network that focussed on the Five Basic Skills, addressing the specific needs of these young people developing life skills and raising aspirations.

**Final proposed project:** run a series of workshops for care leavers and their peers around staying safe online, particularly on social media – a key issue identified through consultation with young people as part of the accelerator programme, but one not being adequately covered in schools. Workshops would focus on developing critical thinking skills and knowledge to enable people to stay safe online.



### Your Own Place CIC

The aim of Your Own Place is to prevent homelessness and every intervention is delivered with this as the final outcome. YOP delivers unique Tenancy and Independent Living Skills (TILS) training, Employment Support and Volunteer Tenancy Mentoring.

**Initial proposed project:** newly designed digital skills workshops for service users, utilising a digital skills trainer with the aim of improving a range of digital skill that will feed into young people's financial and employment capability.

**Final proposed project:** building digital skills components into all TILS+ training courses, toolkits, mentoring employment workshops and in-tenancy support, with the core element being 24 TILS modules. Your Own Place Advisory Board comprised of young care leavers will feedback on TILS+ courses and help refine them over the life of the project.



### Manchester Refugee Support Network

Manchester Refugee Support Network (MRSN) is a grass-roots organisation directly managed by refugee communities, based in Manchester. For over 20 years, MRSN have been providing practical support to those fleeing persecution, conflict, and various forms of injustice and abuse. Their aim is to ensure that these people receive all of the benefits, training, education and opportunities they are entitled to, and to ensure refugees and asylum-seekers understand, and are able to exercise, their rights.

**Initial proposed project:** to include a specific digital skills element at the beginning of an existing programme aimed at helping young refugees find work, the Young Refugee Employment Project, as well as additional digital skills classes.

**Final proposed project:** provide digital employment skills classes for young refugees, providing computers for people to work with and key lessons in developing and uploading CVs and cover letters, searching for jobs online etc. Offer one to one support with each client, and run group sessions to support people to put digital skills into practice in real world job seeking situations.



# Participant factors

When thinking about participants, their organisations and their motivations, what are the important things worth considering? And what are the implications of these?

An overarching consideration to take into account is the balance in any programme between how much it is designed with participants – co-designing the programme based on the individual or collective needs of participants versus being designed for participants – with clear, pre-determined learning opportunities and expectations around outcomes. Ultimately, it comes down to the aims of the programme, and the capacity and resources available to the sponsor to provide a tailored approach.

The participants themselves are a particularly important factor regarding this consideration. Developing a programme structure that has the most effective outcomes, or greatest impact, necessarily depends on the capacity participants have to influence their organisations and wider sector. This section focusses on exploring what this might look like for different people in different types of organisations, and how this could impact what works for a development programme.

## The people

In other worlds where accelerator programmes are primarily used to help small companies and organisations develop their offer and marketability, it is common practice to invest “in people” as much as products or ideas. This is a key point of difference between accelerator-style programmes and more traditional funding models. While the latter will no doubt focus on accountability of the organisation, a more development-focussed model naturally depends on the participants themselves. It also presented a key consideration in the development of this programme as organisations would apply, but it would be individuals who participated.

In any programme where the aim is for participants to learn from and support each other effectively, every person needs to have largely similar objectives and a similar level of engagement. While variation is important to ensure people are exposed to a wide range of ideas, having *too much* variation – in people’s experience, skills, knowledge, interest and engagement in the programme – could be counterproductive. Deciding what balance is right for a programme is an important early step in the design process.

It should be noted that this is perhaps also one of the most difficult elements to control for, and there are a wide range of factors to consider. Investing solely in individuals is a challenge, for instance, as if they move on do they take all the learning with them? Is this even an issue? Similarly, someone’s role does not necessarily determine how well they will embed learning from a programme within their organisation, how invested they will be in the programme, or even what capacity they have to commit to the programme and do everything that needs to be done.

In conducting our evaluation, however – as it would be with any type of development-focussed accelerator or programme – it was clear how important the individual participants were in determining the effectiveness of the programme in achieving its aims.

For Carnegie, it was important the accelerator was open to a range of organisations. The initial plan, in fact, was only to take on three, but the business case was made for increasing investment in the programme to include a larger number of participants. This ensured it provided a spread of different ideas and experiences. A bigger group also presented different dynamics to a smaller one. In this case, while all the participating organisations met the programme criteria, Carnegie made an active choice that variation of people and organisations was ultimately

more important than having organisations with demonstrably similar challenges and project ideas. This was more in line with Carnegie's aims and values, For other organisations this may be different, and may lead to a less competitive environment – a consideration covered in more detail later in this report.

### Who might be involved?

Within the #NotWithoutMe accelerator specifically, a wide range of people took part. In many cases individual organisations had multiple staff members involved, each bringing different skills, priorities and opportunities.

When we discuss the idea of the people involved, here and throughout the report, we are primarily referring to the opportunity and ability anyone has to make necessary change happen within their organisation. In this sense, we are exploring traits and nuances within people's *roles*, not in their character<sup>3</sup>. As will be seen in the following sections, these traits can be nuanced, and hopefully it is clear how each may be more or less suited to certain situations and programmes.

Speaking to all the participants revealed that every individual was able to benefit from, and contribute to, the #NotWithoutMe accelerator in slightly different ways. Some of the factors that helped to explain what different people took away from the programme have been described below. Our intention is to highlight the different requirements and aims people within and across organisations might have, as something that could inform the design of a similar style of programme. This hopefully will enable other funders and organisations – where relevant and appropriate – to build programmes around people themselves, to best meet sector or organisational goals.

Importantly, these factors also relate to the kind of needs or aims a participant themselves might have when joining a programme.

<sup>3</sup> That is not to say character traits are not relevant – there is wealth of available research and evidence that focusses on understanding and utilising character traits in work and project environments. In the context of this programme, however, this is not something we were explicitly exploring or are particularly concerned with. Because this programme was focussed on projects, not people, we were more interested in understanding different types of roles within an organisation.

The following factors are things that can impact the type of outcomes a programme might have, and are worth considering. Again, it is important to highlight that there are not better outcomes or better attributes, this report aims simply to highlight how some of them interact.

### Strategic vs. operational decision-making

What is most important to someone in an accelerator-style programme will depend to some extent on their role within an organisation. If someone's focus is on running programmes and projects for example, they may have different priorities to someone whose role focusses on the broader trajectory of their organisation as a whole. A simple example might be the difference between asking "how can we do this project really well?", and "if we do this project really well, how can we build a new offer around this kind of work?".

For someone interested or invested in the wider strategy of their organisation, the intention behind participating in an accelerator may relate to the opportunities it presents in terms of:

- Being able to have conversations with other participants, funders and experts involved in the accelerator who are familiar with their current experience and challenges, and can provide advice or contacts that are valuable to the organisation's wider aims
- Building internal capacity among other members of staff, so they can take on more programme or project responsibility, freeing up the time of more senior team members

For someone whose focus is more on managing specific projects or programmes, their participation may be driven by slightly different priorities, for example:

- Developing their own skills and subject area knowledge that they can take back into their organisation
- Learning from others and making new contacts who may be valuable in expanding, improving or setting up new projects or programmes

It is important to note that these drivers to participation are not exclusive, but broadly describe the key priorities or aims for an individual participant. Any senior, strategic decision-maker within an organisation could no doubt benefit from learning specific skills or subject area knowledge, for example. But if this was their main takeaway from the programme, it would be sensible to ask whether the right outcomes were being achieved and whether this was an effective use of time and resource. Seniority can also come with commitment trade-offs as outlined in a further section.

Your Own Place provides a good example of people in strategic and operational roles contributing to, and benefitting from, the programme. For the organisation's CEO the programme presented a good opportunity to, among other things, develop the skills of her wider team and build additional capacity within the organisation. And for other YOP staff who attended some of the workshops, the accelerator provided a range of learning and development opportunities that might otherwise not have been easy to come by.

### Someone's sphere of influence

Within their own organisation, or perhaps beyond, how much is someone able to change and challenge day to day practice? When considering the objectives for this, or any, accelerator, this question can become an important factor. For instance, if the aims of the programme revolve around building capacity and knowledge on the topic area with the long-term aim that they in turn share the knowledge further and influence the wider sector, then having participants who are more involved in sector-wide discussions and work has some obvious benefits.

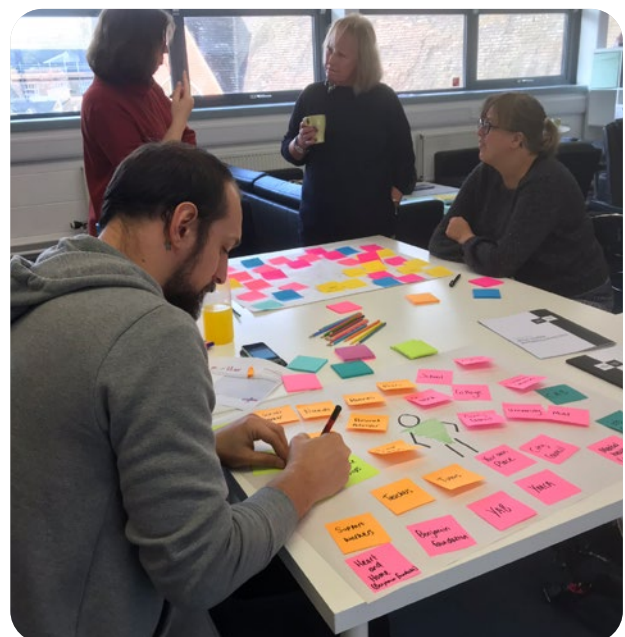
If this is not the primary aim of the programme, however, there may well be benefits in focussing on some of the other factors outlined here – for instance, having people with the time to commit fully to the project and for whom it may be a greater focus has its own benefits.

### How well can this person, in this role, embed learning from the programme within their organisation?

Someone's influence and position within an organisation is also not a determinant of how well, or how motivated they might be, to embed learning from the programme more widely within their organisation. Again, the importance of this depends to some extent on the aims of the programme. In this case, with the accelerator there to build capacity within the sector, sharing learning internally was important.

We heard of a range of examples from the accelerator participants about how they used things they learned during the programme in other interactions within their organisation – from using new meeting and discussion formats to foster new ideas, to embedding wider principles around digital inclusion in everything the organisation is doing with its target audience.

Many participants were able to take learning from the accelerator back into their organisations, and their role or job title did *not* determine their personal interest in sharing and embedding knowledge or techniques.



## How much can someone commit to the programme

A practical, but important, factor to consider is how much each participant can realistically commit to the programme, complete all the tasks and objectives set, and contribute more widely. While it is of course difficult to determine whether an individual would get the most out of the programme against this criteria, each participant's own drivers to participate can tell us about how committed they are likely to be to the programme overall.

For instance, someone who is driven to participate primarily by the appeal of the process itself is potentially – although by no means definitely – going to be more committed throughout the programme than someone who is driven primarily by, for example, one specific outcome.

These factors cannot always realistically be accounted for. But our aim was to cover as many of the considerations that could be important in setting up a similar programme as possible, and wanted to outline them here for interest and to inform wider discussions when designing a development programme.

The Carnegie team were not overly prescriptive about who within an organisation should be the main participant. However, learning from previous programmes demonstrated the need for senior buy-in and support. Therefore, participants were asked to demonstrate they had achieved senior-level buy-in, e.g. a supporting statement from the CEO or Board Trustee. If a funder did want to be highly prescriptive about the type of people they wanted to participate, other factors would need to be considered such as whether the available funding covered staff costs for people at certain levels.

## Recruiting participants to match the approach

Ideally, a recruitment process will balance simplicity – for the applicants as well as the funder – with thoroughness, to allow the funder to adequately identify and assess to some extent the attributes and experience the programme requires.

Identifying the attributes of the participants and determining whether they match the aims of the programme is not easy, however. It might require a longer, more time intensive and personal application process with interviews and more detailed project plans and proposals. This would have a cost to the funder in terms of time and resources, as well as to the participants who may simply feel they cannot justify the time investment required for such an application process. The more intensive the application process, the greater need there is for the funder to also deliver on the elements of the programme that attracted the successful participants in the first place.

The aims of the programme – which are likely to be reflected in the selection of participants – therefore influences what kind of recruitment approach might be most relevant to the funder. Very specific outcomes that require people or organisations in certain positions and a significant level of investment may require more detailed application processes and strict participation criteria. If the outcomes are less specific, or flexibility is valued, then there might be an argument for less prescriptive participation criteria and a less intensive application process, as this would lead to more natural variability among applicants.

## Organisational factors

While individual factors are certainly important to take into consideration, in many ways it is much easier to focus on the organisation rather than the specific people participating in the programme.

Organisations themselves are all different – whether this is related to their stage of development, short and long-term goals, broader or narrower remits, users, financial situation or any other organisational descriptor. Conversations with the accelerator and #NotWithoutMe pilot funding programme participants did, however, identify a number of more specific factors that helped to explain their participation, and to some extent what people were able to take away from the programme.

As with the more role-specific attributes already discussed, there are no ‘better’ goals or approaches for an organisation to have. Depending on the programme aims and process, certain organisations may naturally be more closely aligned with the intended objectives, and this may bring with it some clear benefits to the project as a whole. Alternatively, there may be value in specifically bringing together organisations who are in very different positions to encourage and enable sharing and learning from a more diverse group who otherwise would not engage with each other.

The overarching learning is to consider whether any of the kinds of organisational attributes described below may be important when it comes to achieving the wider aims of a programme. In the case of the #NotWithoutMe accelerator, it was the variety of participating organisations that was considered a key feature. In fact, in line with Carnegie’s broader aim of improving cross-jurisdictional learning, it was important that both the advisory group and the participants represented different regions across the UK and worked in different sectors.

It is worth noting that the factors described below are largely interrelated, but we have split them out to try and show the range of considerations.

## Autonomy to make changes

Similar to the personal attributes of decision-making and influence, some organisations will have more or less autonomy or ability to make decisions and changes quickly as a result of participation in the programme. There are organisational factors that can determine this, such as whether the participating organisation is part of a broader enterprise; the size of the organisation; the governance structure or the remit of the organisation in question.

More autonomous organisations are potentially more dynamic, with a freedom to develop and change that other organisations may not be afforded by things such as their governance structure, size or position within a bigger umbrella organisation. On the other hand, organisations who might be considered less autonomous by this definition, may enjoy greater stability, reach and scale at the expense of flexibility.

For example, the Norfolk Libraries team have a clear remit to provide library services within Norfolk. They are funded by the local authority, and sit within the whole LA structure in the region. In contrast, Your Own Place is a small, independent, social enterprise which, at the time of participating in the #NotWithoutMe programme, had a more mixed funding structure including grants and generated income. These two organisations therefore have different levels of control over the decisions they can make in the short and long term.



## Funding

How organisations are funded can play a role in how they participate in an accelerator-style programme, what they value from the programme, and what kind of programme would be appropriate or relevant to them in the first place.

A simple consideration is whether an organisation is grant-based or has a more commercially focussed or varied funding model.

By 'grant-based' we simply mean organisations who are largely reliant on grants for core funding. Such organisations may be more used to working project to project around their core function/offer, using funding for specific projects to supplement core operating costs and provide the specific activities required by the grant. An outcome of this reliance on core funding grants is that the organisation's core focus is, necessarily, on maintaining day to day functions and services for users.

Organisations with a 'commercially focussed' funding model are likely to be selling services in some capacity, generating an income through other means beside grants. This approach to finances suggests a greater level of flexibility as well as, potentially, different priorities and approaches for the organisation. To reach a point where organisations have commercially viable services suggests a different approach more generally and some level of entrepreneurship among management.



These elements are relevant as certain types of organisations may be more or less suited to a certain programme than others. For instance, a programme with a focus on developing marketable services or products related to the topic area (in this instance, digital inclusion) may be more appropriate for an organisation with an already commercially focussed funding model. If the aim of the programme is to help organisations develop these capabilities, however, then a focus on organisations currently reliant on grant funding may have greater impact.

Among the participating organisations in the #NotWithoutMe programme, there was a mix of funding models. Your Own Place, ProMo Cymru and Rural Media, for instance, all generated some income from selling services, while other participants were predominantly funded through grants.

## Digital inclusion

Another key consideration that may prove useful in thinking about programme participants is where the topic area fits into their wider work. For Carnegie, it was important that there were a range of organisations involved, but meeting the key outcome of supporting and empowering the end user with relevant digital skills had to be feasible for the participating organisations. It could not, for instance, be too far away from their normal role and remit.

For some organisations, digital inclusion could be seen as being a core feature of their work, where digital upskilling and using digital skills and tools to achieve their goals was central to what they do day to day. Other organisations specialised in youth engagement and youth voice, with varying levels of digital skills woven into their core services. And other organisations focussed on neither aspect primarily, but could see a clear role for digital inclusion in the work they do. Where digital inclusion is a secondary function, the opportunities – to fill gaps in knowledge or provide better tools to achieve other purposes – are different.

A key focus of Rural Media's work is in providing young travellers and gypsies with relatively advanced digital skills in creating written and audio-visual content and using online tools to share these outputs. Their proposed project, for instance, involved creating User-Generated Digital Content, utilising an Online Digital Distribution Strategy and running a beneficiary-led social media campaign.

In contrast, while Norfolk Libraries ran some digital-focused programmes, the introduction of more basic digital skills provides another avenue through which they can help young people in their community develop life skills and raise aspirations.

A participant's current relationship to the topic area is worth considering when developing a programme as it provides different opportunities. For Carnegie, one of the accelerator aims was that the core ideas around digital inclusion were adopted by a broader sector than just those working in youth engagement and digital skills. Therefore, there was a specific value associated with engaging other types of organisation.



## Motivations for participation

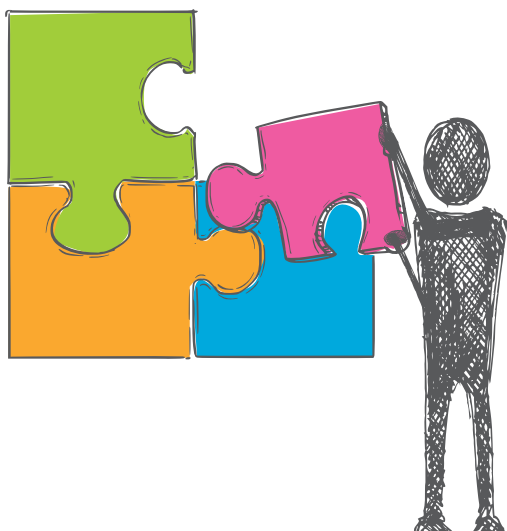
In our conversations with each participant, we identified three broad motivations for joining the programme – in many cases these relate directly to some of the organisational and personal attributes described above. If, in the process of designing an accelerator-style programme, an organisation were to identify certain motivations that were preferable, then understanding some of the above factors may enable sponsors or funders to better identify the kind of organisations who are ideal targets or candidates for the programme.

### Tackling Digital Inclusion Issues

As highlighted previously, it was important for the Carnegie team to have a range of organisations in terms of their experience with tackling digital inclusion issues. For instance, some organisations had this as a formal, fundamental part of their work, for others it was more informal, or largely manifested in standalone projects. This existing relationship, however, does factor into motivations for participating.

For digitally focussed organisations, the accelerator programme could be seen as a 'good fit'. These organisations were very confident with the subject area and the aims of the programme, and developing a relevant project aligned with their own plans and aims in this space. Ultimately, the application was relatively straightforward and they had a high chance of success.

For other organisations less focussed on digital skills and inclusion, the programme presented an opportunity to learn, and use digital skills as a tool to achieve some of their wider aims.



For example, The Manchester Refugee Support Network primarily focusses on supporting asylum seekers through the UK asylum process, and to access employment and benefits. They do not have a specific focus on young people (but young people do use the service), and with limited resources, improving digital skills among their users is not a priority. In line with broader changes in government systems however, asylum and benefits processes are increasingly conducted online, as are employment seeking opportunities, presenting additional digital challenges for some users. By including an additional digital skills and inclusion element within their existing Young Refugee Employment Project, therefore, presented MRSN with an opportunity to equip their users with the knowledge that would help them achieve their wider organisational aims.

### Learning

Learning is a key element and output for almost any accelerator-style programme. The value people expect to get from the learning opportunities within a programme, however, are likely to differ to some extent.

The Carnegie programme had a number of clear learning aims for participants. However, participants often had their own expectations and hopes about what these would entail. Some participants were particularly interested in developing their own skills and knowledge, or that of other members of their team, to improve their digital inclusion projects and understanding. In these instances, the learning motivation was about doing their work as well as they could, and identifying new opportunities to do things better.

Other participants had broader learning aims. As well as seeing a benefit in terms of knowledge and skills, what some participants were really interested in was opportunities for business development and growth, seeing the programme as a platform to develop useful contacts and to



benefit from some level of coaching or advice that they could use to develop and expand their services. As such, networking was a key motivation for some people – and is a focus in the next section.

In some cases, skills development for other members of staff also presented business development opportunities – using the programme as a way to upskill other team members, give them experiences they otherwise might not have, and ultimately enable them to take on additional roles that would free up more senior team members for other tasks.

Learning opportunities were perceived differently among #NotWithoutMe accelerator participants. For example:

For an organisation like Your Own Place, that is transitioning away from grant-funded projects into a completely self-sufficient model, there was a desire for advice and knowledge about how to manage and approach that transition. The #NotWithoutMe accelerator was not necessarily geared to providing that level of input, but did provide opportunities for other YOP team members to learn skills that enabled them to do more, freeing up some time for YOP's Director to focus on other things rather than just delivering the project.

For Norfolk Libraries, learning expectations revolved specifically around the development and delivery of digital inclusion projects as this was an area the participating team had identified as being of particular value to them and the wider Norfolk Libraries team.

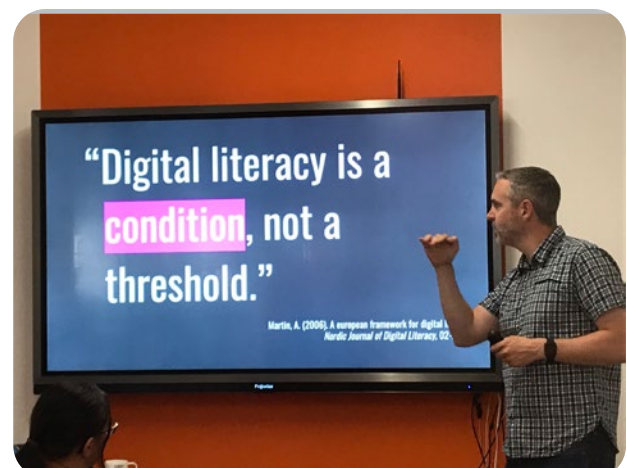
## Funding

Funding, or the potential for funding, is obviously a key feature of many programmes run by grant-giving organisations. In the #NotWithoutMe accelerator, Carnegie covered costs for participation (travel and accommodation) in the workshops, and provided £3,000 for participants to use for costs related to the project – largely used for covering staff time, youth engagement of some kind as people developed their project plans, or equipment needed (although it was expected, for example, that it would not be used solely for purchasing technology). A further £40,000 funding was available for one of the projects following a competitive pitching process at the end of the programme.

For all organisations, the availability of funding is obviously a key motivator for participating. And a primary function of any funding organisation is the provision of financial support that enables organisations to conduct the on-the-ground work that supports a grant-giving organisation's wider aims. In a funding model where there is a greater emphasis on development, however, there are other motivations that also play a role.

For some organisations, the primary motivation can specifically be the process of taking part. Largely, this relates to the aims of the organisations in question and where they see value in an accelerator-style programme compared to other funding opportunities.

In a later section we cover in more detail the role of funding as part of the accelerator and some of the implications.



# Programme factors

Carnegie's #NotWithoutMe accelerator programme was developed with a range of key aims in mind. These objectives led to certain decisions being made about how the programme would run, what elements would be included and who the programme would be targeted at.

In designing and running the programme Carnegie had complete control over some elements, and less over others. Overall the aim was for the programme to be reflective, informed as it went on by the needs of the participants. This is why ad hoc support was available from the Carnegie team, and the later workshops were less defined than the early workshops.

Below, we have outlined some of the key features and opportunities presented by the accelerator programme in the way it was run. We have also highlighted where some of these things could be different to achieve different outcomes, or may have had unintended consequences.

All of these areas present things an organisation designing their own accelerator-style programme may wish to consider to better enable them to meet the aims of the programme.

Before outlining each of the factors present within the #NotWithoutMe accelerator, it is worth re-affirming two broad considerations that should form part of the design process for a similar programme:

- What is the right combination of these factors for a programme? Some features are complimentary, while others may clash.
- What is controllable, and what is not? Some elements are not necessarily within the control of the organiser, so outcomes should be based on what can be controlled for and managed.

## Making connections and networking

The aim to create and foster connections was often cited as an important reason participants had applied to take part in the first place. While other funding streams often provide the opportunity to meet other recipients, this programme foregrounded this opportunity, and many participants responded positively to this approach – seeing the value in itself, but also as something different or new, that they had not had exposure to previously.

As mentioned previously, it was important for Carnegie that a range of organisations took part in the accelerator. Part of the reason for this interest in variety was the role of the accelerator in bringing people and organisations together who might not normally interact, with the intention of fostering cross-sectoral learning around designing and running effective digital inclusion projects. Networking with participants, mentors and sector stakeholders was therefore considered a key opportunity area and selling point for participants.

The value participants took from this specific aspect of the programme depended on their expectations about what it would actually entail and the opportunities it would afford them. This links very closely with the type of organisations and individual participants attending the workshops. For some, the general variety was considered a positive. For others whose primary motivation was building strong connections and meeting people who could help move their organisation or wider programme forward, this element of the programme felt slightly lacking. They would have benefitted from having more people or organisations in similar or advanced stages as their own.

## Examples from the programme:

### Building local capacity

Manchester Refugee Support Network engaged the local library service in Manchester, signposting users to the services they provide, particularly around access to and use of computers. This connection stemmed very simply from MRSN becoming aware of the services provided by one of the other participants – the Norfolk Library Service.

### Tapping into expertise

Outside of the programme, the Tower Hamlets Young People's Advice Centre team engaged the Rural Media team on a project they were running. The RM team were able to provide some guidance on specific digital aspects of the programme, not constricted by location.

### Business development and growth

Your Own Place were potentially in a unique position among the participating organisations in terms of their business aims and position, in the process of transitioning away from more traditional funding streams into a more commercial and self-sustaining model. Some organisations had already done this, for others it was not a priority. Among the facilitators, participants, experts and sector stakeholders involved in the programme, none had quite the expertise Your Own Place really needed to help them on this path. That is not to say the organisation did not have other positive outcomes from the programme, but simply that the programme was not tailored to meet their specific business development challenges.

Striking the right balance between similarity and difference is important, and ultimately needs to be an active decision taken during the planning process based on the wider programme aims.

The format of the programme itself was designed to encourage participants to share knowledge and learn from each other, including down time at workshops for informal conversations and including team-based activities within the workshops themselves. Each workshop also included experts from relevant fields, providing additional opportunities for participants to engage with people from outside their own networks.

The type of relationships is also a consideration, as certain types of connection can be manufactured to a greater or lesser degree. For instance, connections aimed at building local capacity require bringing together organisations in the same regions. Connections aimed at building mentor-mentee relationships require bringing

together organisations and individuals with quite specific skills, able to help each other with particular challenges (especially in areas such as business development and growth). It is worth noting, however, that building local capacity was not an aim of this programme, and while geographic separation of participants may work against local collaboration, it does not put up barriers to general learning and sharing knowledge.

The opportunity for participants to network and meet other funders had also been a secondary ambition for the accelerator, but in reality, not feasible for the team to facilitate given the other competing priorities of the programme delivery. Therefore, if this was a primary aim of an accelerator, time to develop these relationships and cultivate opportunities for funders and participants should be prioritised in the programme design.

## Digital tools

The Carnegie team set up a digital platform – a simple shared folder in Google Docs – for participants to access documentation from the programme and share other resources of interest or relevance. Although some people found these resources helpful, engagement with this aspect of the programme was limited. Participants generally felt that while the idea was positive, there was a lack of time once back in their day jobs to really engage with these extra materials. The Carnegie team also highlighted the fact that they did not feel they had the time to actively curate and manage this tool as well as they wanted. A further reflection was whether more could have been done to make the documentation and assets more useful beyond the #NotWithoutMe workshops. Making edits to the assets or providing additional commentary or notes, for example, could have helped participants use them and share learning within their wider organisation more effectively.

This is not an unusual finding, with solutions like this often going under-utilised. What this suggests is that rather than defaulting to having some kind of sharing platform in place, a broader conversation when designing the programme may be needed, in addition to building these requirements into the time, capacity and resource needed from the delivery team from the start. What expectations are there for how it will be used? What value is it adding, and how can its use be maximised if it's important?

## Location

The organisations participating in the #NotWithoutMe Accelerator were based in Norfolk, London, Manchester, Herefordshire and Cardiff. An active choice was made to hold workshops in a range of locations, with Carnegie covering the costs for participants to attend. There are practical reasons for employing this approach, including balancing travel time for organisations and access to different facilitator organisations. It is also worth highlighting that it is of particular importance for Carnegie to work across the UK and improve cross-jurisdictional learning and capacity within the sector. Of the

many design considerations, location is one that has immediate cost implications – moving workshops and people around the country is expensive compared to running a programme in one location.

Speaking to the participants also identified a range of tangible benefits and challenges that arise from taking this approach, making this a relevant consideration for any funder.

For some, the varying locations and opportunity to travel was in itself a positive, providing a break from their day to day and related to having space to think, explored more below. In some instances the appeal of this was enough to encourage participants to apply in the first place, which they may not have if the programme had been fixed in one location or local to them.

A feature of this approach worth highlighting is the number of times participants are expected to travel or the time they need to take out of their day-to-day to effectively participate. The overall consensus was that five workshop sessions and an additional away day for the pitch presentation was on the long side. However, perceptions of this throughout depend largely on what value participants felt they were getting out of the process. The right length or commitment for a programme is likely to be determined by how well the other factors are accounted for.

A key enabler for successfully holding the sessions around the country, and ensuring participants could attend, was the logistical support provided by the Carnegie team. Things may not have run nearly as smoothly without this. The capacity of the funding team, therefore, is a key consideration for this kind of project – it is naturally a lot more labour intensive than other traditional funding models.

Some of the participants felt that the opportunity to travel to other locations was beneficial. For ProMo-Cymru, who almost exclusively conduct work in Wales, it was seen as a good opportunity to find out how digital inclusion was being talked about in other areas of the UK.

## Space to think

The idea of providing participating organisations with the space to think about their proposed projects was a central theme in developing the accelerator. It stemmed from the observation from the previous #NotWithoutMe programme that the development of ideas into actionable projects required time for reflection and development that is not always afforded by traditional funding models.

The structure of the accelerator was largely built around this specific premise, spreading five workshops over six months, with the aim of developing people's initial project ideas into fully fledged project plans.

Responses from participants certainly suggested this element of the project had worked well. Almost all participants highlighted having 'space to think' as a very tangible benefit and notable part of their experience. The freedom to reflect on, change and develop their project plans was a noticeable difference from more traditional funding for some of the participants.

Looking at the difference between the initial project proposals and those submitted at the end of the programme provided a very tangible example of this development. The Carnegie team and panel judging the final pitches, made up of members of the existing advisory group, were all impressed with the plans presented by the participants, and could point to clear differences from the initial submissions.

The provision of time to think and develop ideas also stemmed from other ways the programme was designed. Having the workshops in a range of locations that required participants to travel provided people with some specific lots of time where they could put their minds to the programme. Many participants described these moments positively. Rather than diving straight back into their day to day work, travel to and from the workshops provided them with an opportunity to discuss with colleagues, focus on working on

their project plans and think more widely about how what they were learning could be applied more generally.

Precisely what participants are thinking about when they have this space is related to the wider objectives of the accelerator. A central aim for Carnegie was for the participants to develop their project proposals, and through talking to participants and reviewing the submissions at the end of the programme, this certainly appears to have been successful in encouraging people to reflect on and improve these. Some participants specifically discussed the value of being able to reflect more broadly on the trajectory of their organisation and what steps they might take to change or develop what they do at an organisational, rather than programme, level.

### Examples from the programme:

The Norfolk Library Services team specifically mentioned the value of having time on the train returning from accelerator workshops to discuss the project with a colleague and focus specifically on developing their ideas.

This feeling also went beyond the specific project proposals being developed as part of this programme. The Your Own Place team used that valuable train time, among other moments, to think about where digital inclusion could sit in their wider programme of work. They wanted to integrate it into everything they did, beyond a specific project. Furthermore, this space to think even enabled the team to think about the trajectory and aims of the organisation, well beyond digital inclusion work. While not an intended outcome for the accelerator, it does demonstrate the value of having time away from day-to-day management.

## Availability of funding

Following the competitive pitching process at the end of the accelerator, one participant in the accelerator programme received £40,000 to run their project, similar to the competitive funding process employed by existing accelerator models. The existence of this funding was a key feature of the programme. Discussions with participants and the Carnegie team highlighted a number of potential benefits and challenges this raised.

Alongside this final pot, participants were also provided with £3,000 funding. It was anticipated this money would cover time to participate in workshops, as well as being available for testing ideas with target audiences, but the participants were given flexibility to spend this money as they felt appropriate. Importantly though, this initial funding was intended to enable organisations to participate in the #NotWithoutMe accelerator, rather than acting as the sole incentive itself. It is worth noting that given the time intensive nature of the programme, even with this financial support some of the organisations considered it an investment on their part as much as Carnegie's.

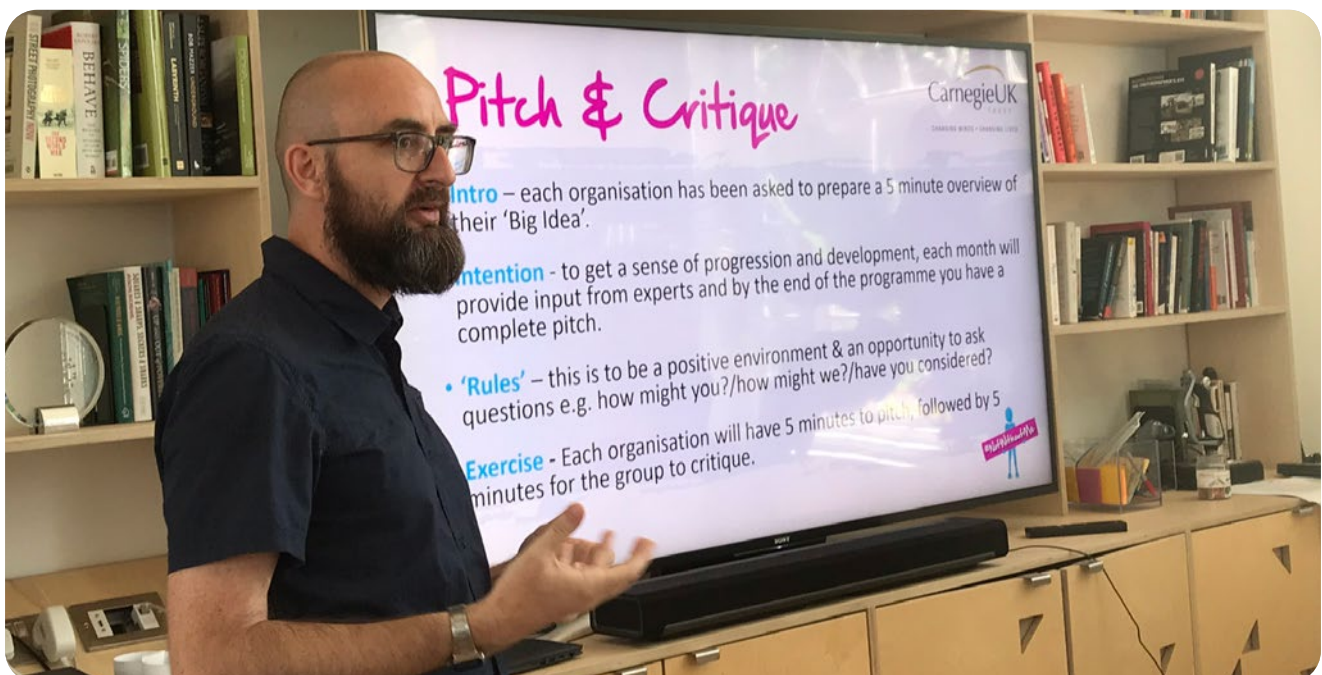
A 'traditional' accelerator style programme, as often used within the tech sector, has very defined outcomes for the participants. Participating organisations are heavily invested specifically because the outcomes are tangibly linked to

the ongoing development and success of their organisation. So much so, that some organisations pay to participate, not the other way round.

All of the participants reported that the funding was important to them in one way or another. In applying for the programme all were weighing up to some degree how much value they thought they would get from the learning element of the programme, versus the opportunity to run their proposed project. As such, the funding played an important role:

- **Incentivising participants.** For some participants, the potential to fund a whole project was the main motivation for participating and committing to the programme.
- **Empowering end users.** To provide outcomes directly to end users, organisations still need to be supported to run their proposed programmes.
- **Generating competition.** The final funding available as part of the accelerator also could be seen to foster competition between the participants.

The less an organisation thinks they will take away from the programme itself, the more of a role the final funding pot plays as an incentive to



participate. The value of funding, therefore, cannot be ignored as a tool to help attract organisations to a programme. The £40,000 final funding offered by Carnegie was, it should be noted, not enough to be transformational for an organisation, but enough to run a high-quality project over a year – although the Carnegie team also noted this was in tension with accepted best practice of funding for a sustained three to five-year period, including some element of core funding coverage.

The final funding available as part of the Carnegie programme also could be seen to foster competition between the participants. While it is not possible to say how different the outcomes or final proposals would have been if the funding was not there, participants did feel it played a role. Certainly, encouraging competition between organisations is likely to motivate at least some participants to commit more than otherwise to develop their ideas. On the other hand, some participants felt that towards the end of the programme it could have had a slight negative effect on the willingness of participants to share ideas and knowledge. The extent to which this truly impacted the programme and the participants is, however, very difficult to measure.

Depending on the programme and investment available, there is of course no need to limit funding to just one project. Making funding available for any participants who meet the criteria for a developed project plan could potentially provide a different incentive that fosters shared endeavours in a different way.

As highlighted previously, where capacity building and organisational development are priorities then funding may play less of an important role. For some funders, not offering funding may reassure them that all participants are fully committed to the broader development process. The funder would need to be willing and able to effectively sell the benefits of their programme to the types of organisations they would like to participate, and deal with what may be a more difficult, and time-consuming recruit. Where short- or medium-term outcomes for end users is the primary aim, then funding to run projects that benefit them could be seen as extremely important – in which case the funder may see not providing funding as undermining their wider programme.

## Engaging young people in the development process

One of the ways the participants could use the funding was to engage young people in the development of their project. Some of the organisations were already experienced in working with young people and included users in testing their project plans, while others were less experienced. Engaging young people in this way is not always easy, and to a large extent will depend on the organisation's ongoing relationships with young people they could work with.

Tower Hamlet's Young People's Advice centre, for instance, had immediate access to a range of young people active within the community and already engaged in existing initiatives, and were able to test the ideas for their project with them as part of the accelerator. Other organisations had less immediate connections with young people, or struggled to stretch the funding far enough to include these extra elements over staff time to participate in the workshops.

Where organisations were able to engage young people in the accelerator, the impact on the project proposals was positive. Many of the participants were able to refine their project ideas in terms of the key audience or topics to address with direct input from their target audiences.

For instance, the Tower Hamlet's Young People's Advice centre identified employment as a particular concern among their target audience, and therefore proposed focussing on this as the starting point for intervention in their proposed project.

## Funder support

Although the accelerator approach was a relatively new one, the Carnegie team brought a wealth of previous experience in the digital inclusion and funding sector to the programme. To ensure they had the right capacity, knowledge and contacts on the team they specifically brought in a new colleague to act as a Carnegie Associate to help design and deliver the programme. In addition, Carnegie secured a range of external experts to provide input to the workshops and, as mentioned previously, to offer input as part of the advisory group for the programme.

Throughout the accelerator the Carnegie team were on hand to answer questions and provide support to the participants. After each workshop the team made themselves available to discuss the outcomes and learning from the session, any follow-up questions the participants had, and how what they had learned or covered in the workshops might feed into the development of their project. It also provided a platform for people to feedback on the process

Not every organisation made use of these feedback sessions, but those who did valued the opportunity to talk openly about their specific programme with the Carnegie team. Those who didn't appreciated the fact that opportunity was there if they wanted it. A potential reason for people not always making use of

these catch-up calls could simply be that once they were back in their day to day roles, the accelerator was de-prioritised again until the next workshop.

This does raise a question regarding how to maintain the programme outside of the workshops. The Carnegie team included these feedback calls and, as noted previously, a digital tool for sharing resources in an attempt to do this. These features had mixed successes, but it would be unfair to assume that these small additions could maintain engagement outside the workshops, regardless of how effective they were. If maintaining engagement is a key element of the programme, this likely would need to underpin the entire design of the programme. Keeping the accelerator short and intensive would potentially be the only way to foster high levels of engagement with participants who are already running organisations or programmes. Whether this would align with the wider aims of the programme and the participants the funder wants to engage, however, would require consideration.

For the Carnegie team there was also a question of how much input, advice and direction is appropriate to provide when participants are ultimately competing for funding, given the multiple roles the Carnegie team had to play in terms of funder, critical friend and accelerator delivery lead. However, participants were aware of the opportunity to gain feedback and, if anything, felt the Carnegie team could have even pushed or





challenged them further. How much coaching a funder would feel is appropriate is an important consideration for programme design, and relates closely to the aims of the project. There are many reasons that additional one to one support could be beneficial, for organisational and personal development as well as project outcomes for end users. Whether this is a central or an additional element of a programme, however, depends on a number of factors such as:

- What capacity and expertise does the funder team hold – can they provide all the support required?
- If there are gaps in expertise within the funder team, should these be bolstered by additional external experts, or new team members brought on board?
- If this support is distributed unequally among the participating organisations – for example, based on who is most actively seeking assistance – is this okay?
- How much challenge can or should the funding team provide to participants?

This is by no means an exhaustive list. Each of these things could have implications for the programme, both in terms of the style and feel of the accelerator, and on the cost to run.

The Carnegie team members were an invaluable asset to the programme in this respect. They brought a wealth of knowledge, experience and connections to the programme which could not necessarily be replicated without careful planning.

A further question relating to support is the extent to which the funder should invest more time in participants who are struggling or wavering in an effort to get everyone to the end of the programme together, or to invest more time in the most promising projects and organisations. This is not a question that needed to be answered in the #NotWithoutMe accelerator, largely because all participants remained invested throughout, but is an eventuality worth considering when thinking about what resources and support can and should be provided in a similar programme.

## Learning opportunities

Before participants begin a programme, the funding organisation has to have made some decisions about what knowledge and skills they will need to achieve the programme's goals. We have highlighted the importance of co-designing programme design to the participants, but there will always need to be some pragmatic decisions made about what exactly this includes – a programme will never be a completely perfect fit for each of the participants.

In any programme that revolves around upskilling and knowledge sharing, there is a challenge in matching the content to the participants. Keeping workshop content relevant and useful to a mixed group of participants is difficult, particularly when it was Carnegie's specific intention to bring together a variety of different types of organisations and sectors. This also relates to the broader consideration of how much the programme is intentionally designed to adapt to the needs of the participants.

There are a number of things that could be used to do this:

- A flexible, or iterative programme is important. Ensuring the needs of the participants are identified at the earlier stages of the programme will enable the funder to adapt the later elements to meet some of these needs – whether through workshops, additional support and resources, or helping create new connections, among other things.
- Many of the organisational factors described above, for example, provide helpful insights about what skills or knowledge may be more or less relevant to participating organisations.
- Experience is important – Carnegie was able to draw on a history of funding organisations and programmes to know generally what tends to have worked before.

The learning opportunities within the #NotWithoutMe accelerator were obviously a key part of the programme. The structure, having six workshop sessions spread over the course of the programme, was intended to provide a platform for sharing knowledge and upskilling participants and their organisations in a range of ways, all the while feeding into the development of their project proposals.

Another design consideration that relates to the specific programme aims is how much workshop sessions should focus on specific skills development or wider processes and systems. As can be seen from the workshop list below, the #NotWithoutMe accelerator aimed to cover a mixture. Although participants reported getting more value out of certain workshops than others, generally participants acknowledged that the mixture of content and topics provided a variety of learning opportunities. The earlier workshops did benefit from a longer planning process and on the whole they felt more universally relevant and more 'polished', whereas participants tended to suggest the later workshops (network development and communication focused) were slightly less developed or directly relevant to their work.

It is worth noting that, in response to requests from the participants, the later workshops were intended to provide more opportunities for participants to work with each other and more free time to develop their own project plan. This raises additional questions about what the best approach might be when it comes to designing sessions and learning opportunities in a programme:

- Is the same person expected to attend all the workshops on behalf of their organisation? If they do, are they supposed to find them all equally useful or relevant to their work?
- Is there a base level that all participants need before the programme can think about providing tailored or more specific activities?

- Is consistency across the whole programme, or potentially multiple programmes, more or less important than tailoring learning to each participant?
- Are there areas that do not appear to be relevant to all participants, but that they will nonetheless benefit from?

Whether every workshop or element of an accelerator is actually needed is, therefore, another important consideration. Perception of the use of time is incredibly important for participants when it comes to their overall experience. For some participants, whole days out of the office are a considerable investment, so not feeling like they are getting value from certain workshops or programme elements can have a negative overall effect on their perception of the whole accelerator. It may not be practical or possible for every participant to get equal value out of each session or aspect of a programme, but is something worth considering when planning. The #NotWithoutMe accelerator was also all delivered through in-person workshops, therefore an alternative could be to explore a blended approach of offline and online workshops.

There may also be scope to include training or workshops on areas not initially planned for the programme. During the accelerator the Carnegie team identified other areas that, while not requested explicitly by participants, may have been valuable such as topics like finance or marketing. This ability to flex, that we have discussed previously, is not just about participant requests, but being able to respond to other needs identified as the programme progresses.

A tangible outcome from the accelerator for participants was how they were using learning or experiences from the workshops in their work now. Certain workshops such as the introduction to digital inclusion, user centred design and measurement and evaluation workshops gave people actionable knowledge they could apply relatively easily. Others such as the influencers and eco-systems workshop had less immediately tangible outcomes that participants could apply.

## Examples from the programme:

### Knowledge-sharing around digital inclusion

The Manchester Refugee Support Network highlighted that one principle learning around digital inclusion that shaped the development of their project had come from an incidental conversation at one of the workshops. It was suggested they focus on PC skills, as that is what job applications need (not smartphone skills) but are in general decline.

### Learning and practice/experience around bid writing and funding proposals

Some of the participants were less accustomed to the process of bid writing and pitching for funding than others. Going through the process of developing a project plan and then pitching in front of the panel for the full funding was a valuable learning experience for some individual participants. Longer term, some organisations reported using the bids they wrote during the accelerator again.

### Personal skills development (e.g. knowledge and skills around key topics)

For some participants, digital inclusion – or some aspects of it – was a relatively new concept. The project gave some people new ways to think about the work they do or considerations for future work. A number of organisations described how their understanding of digital inclusion had influenced other projects they ran after the accelerator.

### Project relevant skills and knowledge

Some participants described using specific techniques from workshops in their day to day work, such as meeting/workshop formats to foster new ideas within their teams.

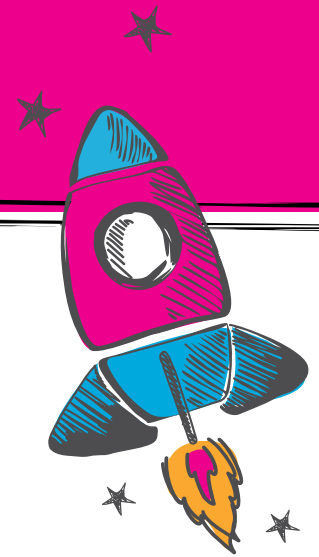
As mentioned in the previous section, thought must be given to the capacity of the funder team and other partners when running a more intensive accelerator-style programme. The workshops outlined below covered a range of skills, activities and areas, which was possible due to the existing knowledge and expertise of the Carnegie team and through engaging external partners to help facilitate sessions. Whether it would be possible to run a similar range and quality of sessions over multiple rounds is worth considering.



The aims of each workshop can be found in the table below.

Workshop	Aims and content
<b>Workshop 1</b> Programme Introduction and Defining Digital Skills	<p>This introductory workshop will provide organisations the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the other organisations taking part in the #NotWithoutMe accelerator and feel comfortable with the aims, intended outcomes and expectations of the programme. Participants will also develop a more detailed understanding of different digital skills elements, and which aspects are most appropriate for their individual organisational context. This workshop will also provide an introduction to the ‘Pitch and Critique’ development process.</p>
<b>Workshop 2</b> Measurement and Evaluation	<p>The second workshop will explore different methods of measurement and evaluation. With hands-on activities and discussion, we aim to broaden perspectives around techniques that can be used to ensure genuinely valuable informative and useful outputs.</p> <p>This workshop will provide an open and honest space for participants to share what has and has not worked for their organisations and examine the perceived gap between the requirements of funders and the requirements of individuals.</p>
<b>Workshop 3</b> User Centred Design	<p>Workshop 3 will explore creative ways to design and deliver solutions ensuring the user is always at the heart. Through interactive activities we will explore the practical challenges for young people in developing their digital skills including: access, language ability, critical thinking and resilience. We will also consider the potential risks of being online, approaches to supporting effective, sustainable safeguarding and how to maximise young people’s opportunities online.</p>
<b>Workshop 4</b> Influencers and Eco-systems	<p>Young people do not encounter your service in isolation, the fourth workshop will explore where your service fits into the world of the young people you work with. It will examine how organisations can engage the wider networks that support the young people including parents, carers, teachers and peer groups. The workshop will also consider where each organisation sits within their local and national eco-system, who are the key stakeholders, what are best strategies for engaging them and what links can be made to existing policies and research.</p>
<b>Workshop 5</b> Telling your Story	<p>This workshop will bring together all the strands of the previous workshops to look at how we communicate the challenge and response to relevant stakeholders. The session will also include practical tips and techniques to develop better presentation skills and confidence.</p>
<b>Workshop 6</b> Legacy	<p>The final session will provide an opportunity for each organisation to deliver their ‘Final Pitch of the Big Idea’ to the Advisory Group.</p>

# Summary considerations



## 1. Scope

Be clear on the parameters of the programme – what is fixed and what is flexible to allow collaborative working with participants to co- design the most effective programme.

## 2. Communications

Develop a clear and simple communications strategy and messaging that articulates the full intended value, particularly the non-financial aspects of the accelerator, to prospective participants.

## 3. Individuals and/or organisations

Consider how you will organise your recruitment process to take account of the needs (time, resource etc.) of both the organisations and the individuals who will take part in the accelerator.

## 4. Participation

Consider the resources your accelerator will need to provide to ensure the programme is accessible to all, such as covering the cost of participant's time and travel to attend.

## 5. Final funding

Understand the implications of how you structure your final funding – will it foster competition or collaboration?

## 6. Networking needs

Understand what type of relationships the sector and your participants are looking to develop, is it local capacity within one area, mentoring opportunities or cross-jurisdictional allies.

## 7. Location

Consider how the location of the accelerator reflects and impacts the outcomes. Would the programme benefit from being in one place focusing on local capacity or multiple locations?

## 8. Filling the gaps

Commit resource to supporting participants between sessions, including investment adapting resources and in supporting participants to share learning within their organisations.

## 9. Roles

Be clear on the different roles your organisation will play in the accelerator and try to be explicit about which role you're playing at different times – funder, facilitator, subject expert.

## 10. Partnerships

Collaborate with others if you need support.

# REVEALING REALITY

## About Revealing Reality

Revealing Reality is a multi-award-winning insight and innovation agency. We enjoy working on challenging projects with social purpose to inform policy, design and behaviour change. Many of our projects, particularly those in the media space, have uncovered areas of insight that we feel are under researched. We would prefer that key stakeholders with responsibility in this space were pursuing these avenues of research, however we believe progress isn't being made fast enough. Therefore, in order to prompt action and begin necessary conversations, we have made the decision to embark on a series of self-funded projects exploring these areas – enabling us to become thought leaders in the space of online media habits and behaviours.

Visit [www.revealingreality.co.uk](http://www.revealingreality.co.uk) to find out more about our work or to get in touch.

## About the Carnegie UK Trust

The Carnegie UK Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by changing minds through influencing policy, and by changing lives through innovative practice and partnership work. The Carnegie UK Trust was established by Scots-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1913.

Andrew Carnegie House  
Pittencrieff Street  
Dunfermline  
KY12 8AW

Tel: +44 (0)1383 721445  
Fax: +44 (0)1383 749799  
Email: [info@carnegieuk.org](mailto:info@carnegieuk.org)  
[www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk](http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk)

Report written by Joe Cryer, Revealing Reality

November 2020



CHANGING MINDS • CHANGING LIVES

Carnegie United Kingdom Trust  
Registered Charity No: SC 012799 operating in the UK  
Registered Charity No: 20142957 operating in Ireland  
Incorporated by Royal Charter 1917

ISBN 978-1-912908-53-0



9 781912 908530