# BRITISH COUNCIL

## English Programmes - India

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# Digital Learning Innovation Fund

## Call document

24 May 2022

## 1. Project idea

### 1.1. India context

With over 1.5 million schools, over 9.7 million teachers and more than 260 million learners, India is home to the largest and most complex education system in the world.[1] In addition, as a multilingual country, India has 22 official languages with a national policy that emphasises the study of at least three languages at school.

In the span of just one year, the number of internet users in India rose by over eight per cent to 624 million in 2021[2]. While the drive to promote education technology precedes Covid-19, the need to rapidly pivot to remote and online teaching has only been accelerated since the pandemic. Various national initiatives such as Digital India, Swayam, and DIKSHA (which has a repository of British Council teacher development resources) have increased in popularity and use, as well as those by private providers.

However, the digital divide in India exists at multiple levels such as urban and rural (rural broadband penetration is only 29 per cent against a national average of 51 per cent) and gender. In 2020, 25 per cent of the total adult female population owned a smartphone versus 41 per cent of adult men. Further, Indian women are 15 per cent less likely to own a mobile phone, and 33 per cent less likely to use mobile internet services than men[3].

It is within this varied, diverse and digital-ready context that we propose this grant call.

### 1.2. Brief for digital innovations in English teaching and learning

We are inviting collaborative applications in response to this open call from organisations across the UK and India. In light of the impact of Covid-19, which has accelerated the digital transformation in education delivery in India, we seek applications which spark innovation, and inspire new ways of working, through a digital-first approach effectively using EdTech for teaching and learning English.

The overall objective is for UK and India organisations to generate new learning and insight through research, design and piloting of digital innovations to ensure equitable, high-quality provision of education technology solutions which address a specific English language need in India.

Further, we encourage new ways of collaborative working between the UK and India, by bringing together the likes of universities, research organisations, English Language Teaching (ELT) suppliers, education publishers, EdTech providers and others. We are particularly interested in collaborations between organisations of differing scales who may not traditionally work together, from both countries.

As this fund is an Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) fund, all innovations must meet the ODA and gender eligibility criteria (see sections 5 and 6 below).

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[1] ELT learning and assessment in India_April 2022_new2.pdf (teachingenglish.org.uk)
[2] Digital in India: All the Statistics You Need in 2021 — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights
3 India's gendered digital divide: How the absence of digital access is leaving women behind | ORF (orfonline.org)

Opportunities may be categorised under three broad themes (N.B. these are not exhaustive lists):

### Theme 1: Communities of Practice

This can include Communities of Practice (CoPs) for a specific topic or area (such as Special Educational Needs, assessment, multilingualism etc.) for a specific audience (such as teachers or teacher educators). These can include, for example, CoPs on a bespoke platform or on social media. It is recommended that there are options for teachers for synchronous and asynchronous engagement and via remote, blended and self-access modes. There must be evidence of evaluation of the COP and recommendations for scalability and replicability.

### Theme 2: Research

This can include applications for research such as the intersection between technology and areas like Special Educational Needs, assessment, multilingualism etc. Insight that responds to specific questions not yet investigated in India are welcomed. In addition, the inclusion and involvement of early career researchers is encouraged, as is a focus area that influences an aspect of policy or assists in implementing the National Education Policy 2020.

### Theme 3: Trials and/or Pilot project implementation

We welcome action-focused responses, which tackle issues of digital equity and access to education, push boundaries and are a catalyst for real change, supporting post Covid-19 recovery. We are interested in ideas that are evidence-based, have longevity and/or the potential to be scaled up or generate learning for India and similar countries. This also refers to platforms or projects that may have been already developed and trialled in other countries as a response to the pandemic and the applicant organisation would like to pilot/trial it in India (contextualising as relevant).

We are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion. This includes taking an inclusive approach to the development of your idea and when considering the audiences you want to reach. We expect to engage with individuals and organisations of different genders, ethnicities, sexualities, abilities and ages either directly through the commission – or indirectly through your project audiences.

We are also committed to UK Government and wider donor '*Principles for Digital Development'*

## 2. Relevance to economic development and social welfare (Official Development Assistance (ODA) eligibility)

For the purpose of this Fund, we define activities leading to impact with development relevance as activities that have the potential to contribute to the economic development and social welfare of India, benefitting low income and/or vulnerable populations.

In order to be considered for funding, **all proposals must clearly demonstrate a primary focus on development and articulate a plausible route to positive impact. Applications which do not meet this criterion cannot receive support under the Digital Innovation Fund.**

Development relevance can be longer term and less direct than in other areas. In all cases, it is the responsibility of the applicant to articulate within the application how the proposed activities will meet these criteria.

Applicants must complete the ODA compliance section of the application form and should not expect reviewers to make assumptions about development impact that is not clearly described within the proposal.

**Failure to demonstrate ODA eligibility will render your application ineligible regardless of other success criteria. Please make sure you consider the ODA relevance of your application. A strong case for your proposal must be made.**

In order to show development relevance within the context of their proposed project, applicants are advised to include within their application reference to any local or national consultation, links to government policies, and existing links with government institutions and must clearly articulate the importance to relevant challenges in partner countries.

Agreements for ownership and exploitation of intellectual property generated through project activities must be consistent with the primary aim of addressing development issues.

**ODA transparency and reporting**

As part of the government's commitment to ODA transparency and in line with FCDO ODA reporting requirements, there is a requirement to publish information about ODA grants including project titles and summaries via the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) registry.

The purpose of publishing information via the IATI registry is to make information about ODA easily accessible to governments, stakeholders and other relevant groups in beneficiary countries. All funded projects from this programme will be published in this way. Please therefore write your project title and summary in such a way that they are meaningful and accessible to non-specialist audiences, following publication.

It is expected that the project title and summary are written in plain English and avoid the use of jargon, acronyms, puns and plays on words. **Please also make clear in your project title and summary how your project is ODA-compliant,** for example by identifying the development challenge(s) being addressed, the aims of the project and the beneficiary countries.

## 3. Gender Equality Statement

To comply with the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014, applications must outline how they have taken meaningful yet proportionate consideration as to how the project will contribute to reducing gender inequalities in the Gender Equality Statement section of the application form.

**Applicants are required to consider the impact their project will have on gender.** This should be about the project specifically – the outputs and outcomes; the make-up of the project team; participants,

stakeholders and beneficiaries of the project; and the processes followed.  It should not be a re-statement of your Institution's policy, you may refer to the policy, but should show how the policy will be implemented in terms of the project.   The Gender Statement must **address the below criteria**, with an understanding that, depending on the nature of project, not all questions will be applicable**.   If a question is not applicable, you will need to articulate the reasons why.**

- Have measures been put in place to ensure equal and meaningful opportunities for people of different genders to be involved throughout the project? This includes the development of the project, the participants, and the beneficiaries.
- The expected impact of the project on people of different genders, both throughout the project.
- The impact on the relations between people of different genders and people of the same gender. For example, changing roles and responsibilities in households, society, economy, politics, power, etc.
- How will any risks and unintended negative consequences on gender equality be avoided or mitigated against, and monitored?
- Are there any relevant outcomes and outputs being measured, with data disaggregated by age and gender (where disclosed)?

UKRI provide useful guidance on Gender Equality Statements for their grant applications.  You can find this at: Equality, diversity and inclusion – UKRI

The British Council reserve the right to reject the application if no consideration has been given to gender equality or if the proposal is assessed to result in a negative impact for gender equality.


## 4. Eligibility for digital innovations

This 'Digital Learning Innovation Fund' is designed to support collaborations between the UK and India.

- We are inviting applications for innovative responses to this open call. Applications must include at least one partner in the UK and one from India. Applicants must be living in their respective country at the time of applying and for the duration of this project.

- Applicants can apply for between **£20,000 to £25,000** (all inclusive) to realise their innovative idea, up to a maximum value of **£25,000** per project. Applicants with in kind or matched support are welcome, although this is not essential. Match funding cannot be provided through other British Council funded programmes.

- Applications should be jointly submitted and signed by all named collaborators, with one principal applicant e.g., a lead UK partner organisation, who will be contracted and responsible for leading communications and disseminating the grant to all collaborators.

- Organisations and/or informal collectives/networks are eligible to apply but should have demonstrable experience of managing similar projects and grants.

- Applicants must be able to demonstrate clear benefit to India and meet the ODA and gender criteria above, which should be reflected through the project planning (including budget allocation), delivery and dissemination. This includes demonstrating how the local partners or their audiences may benefit. Mutuality must be a central component to the international collaboration.

- We expect applications to embed principles of equality, diversity and inclusion through their core proposal and idea (including costs relating to captioning videos or translating content).

- We are interested in new, original ideas in response to this brief. Existing projects and programmes will be ineligible. Exceptions apply for existing ideas which have reached a pilot or prototyping phase but have not been realised publicly.

- Applicants will be expected to plan, design, and realise their project from **16 August 2022** with the main activity complete by **31 January 2023**. The main activity can take place any time during the year, although we anticipate that you will respect the annual academic calendar (and holiday breaks) in India. Expected outputs include: a report on the project, a presentation (and/or webinar) summarising key activities, learning and recommendations and, if applicable, information on licensing and other technical requirements.

- If relevant to their project idea, applicants must ensure their idea is compatible with platforms available in India, and must provide details on how this will be realised given the India context and confirm that they will put relevant agreements in place with host organisations, online sites, media partners etc.

- Successful applicants will own the copyright of any work created but must grant the British Council, as the commissioning partners, free and unequivocal use of any arising outputs, which may include promotion of works through our digital channels or exhibiting works in the future.  For the avoidance of doubt, this license will not include use of any work for commercial purposes.

- Successful applicants will be required to keep in regular communication with the British Council, offering project updates and share their project monitoring and evaluation progress and final reports for review and publication.

## 5. Selection process and criteria

Applications will be reviewed by a panel from the British Council. Our assessment of successful applicants will be based on the following criteria:

- **Innovation** – the quality and innovative nature of the idea and approach, alignment to the evidence base around what we know works, especially in EdTech and innovation, and ability to solve a specific challenge or need within the India education system (30%)

- **Collaboration** – the partners involved and the nature of the collaboration, with a particular emphasis on the level of mutuality within the partnership (20%)

- **Impact** – the potential impact this innovation will have on the partners and audiences involved including ability to meet ODA and gender criteria, as well as potential for additional learning, scaling up or further development beyond the scope of this innovation (20%)

- **Quality** – the experience of the applicants in delivering high quality work (15%)

- **Budget** – the extent to which costings are appropriately calculated, reflect good value for money, are relevant to the proposed approach and are distributed amongst partners (15%)

The panel, comprising representatives from the British Council, will consider all applicants to ensure a diverse selection are supported. This will include achieving a geographical spread across the UK and India, the type and format of the response.

**Applicants may be approached with clarification questions or to attend an interview with the panel. Applicants must be available to respond and/or attend an interview if required (conducted digitally) in line with the schedule below.**

## 6. Key dates

| Milestone | Date |
|---|---|
| Application window opens | Friday 27 May 2022 |
| Submission of clarification questions | By Friday 3 June 2022 5 p.m. India time |
| British Council responds to clarification questions | Tuesday 7 June 2022 by 5 p.m. India time |
| Briefing sessions (one hour in duration) | Option 1: Thursday 9 June 2 p.m. India<br><br>Option 2: Monday 13 June 4 p.m. India<br><br>Option 3: Tuesday 14 June 4 p.m. India (TBC)<br><br>To participate in these sessions, please complete this online form: https://forms.office.com/r/TxjWi1cUJ4 or email us at: TeachEnglish.India@britishcouncil.org with the subject line: Digital Learning Innovation Fund. |
| Application deadline | Wednesday 27 July 2022 midnight India time |
| Successful applicants informed and grant agreements issued | w/c Wednesday 3 to Friday 12 August 2022 |
| Project and activity window | Tuesday 16 August 2022 to Tuesday 31 January 2023 |
| Dissemination event(s) (hybrid) | 10 February 2023 |

## 7. Briefing sessions

Potential applicants are welcome to submit questions for clarification in advance and join a Briefing session where we will talk through the Call brief and answer any of the questions you may have about the Digital Learning Innovation Fund. Kindly inform us of any access needs, so we have enough time to put appropriate measures in place. All sessions will be run in English. Applicants can join multiple sessions if they wish.

## 8. How to apply

Please complete and submit the accompanying Microsoft Word version of the application form. Email it to: TeachEnglish.India@britishcouncil.org with a cc to IndiaProcurement@britishcouncil.org

Application documents should include:

- Application Form (MS Word)
- Budget Form (MS Excel)

Please note that all the aforementioned documents should be emailed as part of one compiled folder.

Applications should be submitted by **Wednesday 27 July 2022 midnight India time.**

Applications submitted after this date may not be considered by the reviewing panel.

If you have any questions about your application, please email TeachEnglish.India@britishcouncil.org with a cc to IndiaProcurement@britishcouncil.org.

Applicants who may have additional accessibility needs and would prefer to submit their application in another format should get in touch in advance. We will endeavour to do everything we can to accommodate any needs.

We look forward to receiving your application.

## 9. Reference documents:

ELT learning and assessment in India April 2022 (teachingenglish.org.uk)

School education system in India 2019 (britishcouncil.in)

Teaching and technology case studies from India by British Council

## Appendix

### A. Ethics and research governance

It is essential that all legal and professional codes of practice are followed in conducting work supported by this Innovation Fund. Applicants must ensure the proposed activity will be carried out to the highest standards of ethics and research integrity. In the online application form, applicants must clearly articulate how any potential ethical and health and safety issues have been considered and how they will be addressed, ensuring that all necessary ethical approval is in place before the project commences and all risks are minimised.

Please also refer to the Research Councils UK 'Policy and Guidelines on Governance of Good Research Conduct': Research integrity – UKRI, the Inter Academy Partnership report Doing Global Science: A Guide to Responsible Conduct in the Global Research Enterprise (interacademies.org) or contact us for further guidance.

### B. Safeguarding

The British Council is committed to upholding the rights of children and adults at risk and to promoting their wellbeing, in accordance with all applicable legislation and statutory guidance relevant to the safeguarding and protection of children and adults at risk. We have a comprehensive Safeguarding Policy (and Procedures) which identify our approach to safeguarding and the actions we take to protect children and adults at risk. Please refer to the Safeguarding policy here: Safeguarding global policy statement | British Council

Where proposals involve any contact with children, each organisation and individual will need to adhere to the relevant national requirements to ensure they have been fully vetted to work with under-18s.

### C. Equality, diversity and inclusion

Applicants are encouraged to ensure equal opportunities in the teams implementing their proposed activity. For the British Council's approach, see our Equality Policy at: Equality global policy statement | British Council

### D. Data protection

How we use your information

The British Council will use the information that you provide for the purposes of processing your application, making any awards, monitoring and review of any grants.

The British Council comply with the General Data Protection Regulations 2016/679 (EU) GDPR). We process and handle personal information according to these regulations. The personal information that you provide on this form will only be used for the processing of your application. The information will be viewed by British Council and those who are part of the decision-making process. Your information will not be used/shared beyond the partners listed above for any other purpose without your specific consent. British Council reserves the right to publish and share anonymized aggregated information with stakeholders.

Organisation details, where collected, are used for monitoring and evaluation and statistical purposes. Gender information and country of origin, where collected, is used solely for statistical purposes. If we need to contact you, we will do so using the contact details you have provided.

Under UK Data Protection law, you have the right to ask for a copy of the information we hold on you, and the right to ask us to correct any inaccuracies in that information. If you want more information about this, please contact your local British Council office or the Data Protection Team [inforgovernance@britishcouncil.or](mailto:inforgovernance@britishcouncil.org)g or see our website: [Data protection | British Council]

## E. Payment of the grant

Any grant awarded as part of the 'Digital Learning Innovation Fund' will be paid in accordance with the agreed project and budget plan within 30 days of signature of the Grant Agreement. On completion of the agreed project, the Principal Applicant will submit a final report on the project, and a grant fund utilisation status based on actual expenditure.

The 'Digital Learning Innovation Fund' Grant Agreement will be signed by and the grant paid to the UK Principal Applicant's home institutions. The grant recipient institution that signs the agreement will then be responsible for the management of the grant (including financial reporting). The UK Principal Applicant is responsible to communicate and agree with Partner Applicant and partner country's institution on the project's grant management and disbursement. The final terms will be communicated to successful applicants.

## F. Contractual requirements

The British Council's contractual approach in respect of the grant (Terms and Conditions of the Grant Agreement) ("Grant Agreement") is set out in the Annex.  By submitting a response to this call for applications, you are agreeing to be bound by the terms of these guidelines and the Grant Agreement without further negotiation or amendment.