
Briefing document

Vietnam Digital Learning Innovation Fund Pilot - Open call

1. Overview

The British Council is inviting applications for innovative and collaborative approaches to explore a more inclusive and accessible approach to the provision of English language teaching and learning in Vietnam, particularly through digital and education technology. This 'Digital Learning Innovation Fund' is a pilot fund designed to encourage partnerships between the UK and Vietnam which generate new research, insight and/or innovations to support Vietnam's National Foreign Languages Project (NFLP) in its ambition to improve the teaching and learning of English in Vietnam by 2025, and beyond.

2. About the British Council

The [British Council](https://www.britishcouncil.org) is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We build connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language. We work with more than 100 countries across the world in the fields of arts and culture, education and the English language.

3. Vietnam context

With over 18,000,000 English language learners, approximately 72,000 English language teachers and one of the most rapidly growing economies in South East Asia, Vietnam's potential for educational partnership and digital innovation is significant.

The British Council has operated in Vietnam since 1993. Since then, we have cooperated closely with the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) on a wide variety of projects and

programmes to improve the standard of English language teaching, learning and assessment in state primary and secondary schools, universities and vocational training institutions throughout the country. Key examples are outlined below.

From 2000 to 2008, the British Council worked in close partnership with MOET and Departments of Education and Training (DOETs) from 20 cities and provinces to develop and deliver the Vietnam English Teacher and Trainer Network (VTTN) which built the capacity of 100 key trainers who delivered over 120 workshops to 4,000 Upper Secondary teachers. From 2008 to 2014 the British Council has worked in close partnership with NFLP to provide Primary Innovation methodology training for 189 key primary teacher trainers from 22 universities and colleges and provincial Department of Education and Training (DOET) from 37 cities and provinces. Since 2014, 11,000 teachers and lecturers from schools, colleges and universities have been trained by the British Council. These teachers and key trainers are actively working to bring about positive changes in English language teaching, learning and training across Vietnam.

NFLP was established in 2008 with a remit to 'renovate foreign language teaching and learning in the national education system' and an overall goal to 'create a foundation for universalizing foreign languages in general education by 2025'. Since that time the British Council and NFLP have collaborated on a number of initiatives, including developing a national Competency Framework for English Language Teachers (2012), hosting the New Directions in English Language Assessment conference (2016) and creating the biennial Vietnam Language Assessment Symposium (VLAS 2017 and 2019). Prime Ministerial decision 2080 (December 2017) also references the need to 'promote the application of advanced technologies in foreign languages teaching and learning, using e-learning systems which are suitable and accessible for all people so that they are supported to learn foreign languages wherever, whenever, with every device'.

In 2017, the British Council, in collaboration with MOET, NFLP and the UK's Department for International Trade (DIT), commissioned an evaluative report into NFLP's intention to create an open online e-learning platform. Utilising British Council's experience in designing online language and teaching resources the evaluative report provided comprehensive recommendations for the implementation of the platform, including recommendations of UK capabilities in the ELT and Edtech sector that could potentially support capacity building, products and services needed and timelines for implementation. Since that report, NFLP has commissioned the development of a national e-learning platform which is to be formally launched soon.

The emergence and escalation of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 has had significant impacts on teaching, learning and digital provision across the globe, including Vietnam. [Click here for global reports](#). While the disruption to teaching and learning in Vietnam from Covid-19 has been relatively minimal, as compared with other countries, the pandemic has presented both constraints and opportunities in the domain of technological and digital responses to not only maintain teaching and learning but also widen access to those who may be disadvantaged.

The British Council in South East Asia (which includes Vietnam) is currently designing a new partnership programme which we aim will run for three years focusing on the planning and delivery of research, insight and innovations which will support national education systems in the provision of inclusive, quality teaching, learning and assessment of English.

In September 2020, the UK Government in Vietnam (led by DIT and British Council) along with MOET and NFLP organised a 'virtual' ELT mission. Over 150 educational organisations from both the UK and Vietnam were represented at this 'hybrid seminar'. The event outlined the many partnership opportunities to help further Vietnam's vision to develop English language teaching and learning. At this event, the British Council announced the imminent launch of a fund to support UK-Vietnam Partnerships.

It is within this above context that the 'Digital Learning Innovation Fund' is being piloted, to further cement the strategic partnership in education between British Council in Vietnam, MOET and National Foreign Languages Project (NFLP), who have endorsed this initiative and approach. The Fund is designed to promote partnerships between the UK ELT and EdTech sector and Vietnam partners to create opportunities for innovation and collaboration in the provision of English language teaching and learning.

4. Brief for digital innovations in teaching and learning

We are inviting collaborative applications in response to this open call from organisations across the UK and Vietnam. In light of the impact of Covid-19, which has accelerated the digital transformation in education delivery in Vietnam (a focus already highlighted in the 2017 Prime Ministerial Decision 2080 above), we are now seeking applications which spark innovation, and inspire new ways of working, through a digital-first approach.

We want to encourage collaborative new ways of working between the UK and Vietnam through this new fund – bringing together the likes of Higher Education Institutions, 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 the UK and Vietnam.

The overall objective is for UK and Vietnam organisations to generate new learning and insight through the design and piloting of digital innovations which address a specific English language need within Vietnam.

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

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

Theme 1: Pilot and co-develop digital content [targeting learners, teachers and/or parents]:

- Teacher education – teachers, teacher educators
- Remote, blended and self-access models for CPD for teachers and teacher educators
- Teacher networks and Communities of Practice (online and social media)
- Research and insight to respond to specific questions around digital learning during/post Covid-19 not yet investigated in Vietnam

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- Developing and mapping digital/online resources with the 2018 General English Education Curriculum

Theme 2: Capacity building:

- Teacher education – teachers, teacher educators (e.g. curricula, practicum, etc.)
- Remote, blended and self-access models for CPD for teachers and teacher educators
- ICT applications
- Teacher networks and Communities of Practice (online and social media)
- Research and insight to respond to specific questions about remote or digital capacity building during/post Covid-19 not yet investigated in Vietnam

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 (for example learning from recent reports such as the [World Bank curated Smart Buys](#)), have longevity and/or the potential to be scaled up or generate learning for Vietnam and the wider South East Asia region.

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](#)’

5. 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 Vietnam, 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 and via DFID's national statistics.

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.

6. 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.

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- 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: <https://www.ukri.org/research/global-challenges-research-fund/gender-equality-and-international-development-research-and-innovation/>

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.

7. Eligibility for digital innovations

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

- We are inviting applications for innovative responses to this open call. Applications must include at least one partner in the UK and one from Vietnam. 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 £25-30,000 to realise their innovative idea and we are looking to support approximately two projects in this pilot phase, up to a maximum value of £60,000. 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 Vietnam 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.

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- Applicants will be expected to plan, design, and realise their project from April 2021 with the main activity complete by the end of March 2022. 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 Vietnam.
 - If relevant to their project idea, applicants must ensure their idea is compatible with the Vietnam e-learning platform., which is in the process of being developed for NFLP and must provide details on how this will be realised given the Vietnam 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 and NFLP, 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.

Selection process and criteria

Applications will be reviewed by a panel of representatives from the British Council and Vietnam's National Foreign Languages Project.

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 Vietnam 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 and NFLP, will consider all applicants to ensure a diverse selection are supported. This will include achieving a geographical spread across the UK and Vietnam, 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.

Key dates

| Milestone | Date |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Application window opens | Monday 1 February 2021 |
| Submission of clarification questions | 1 to 4 February 2021 |
| Briefing session (with British Council and NFLP representatives) | Thursday 4 February 2021 9.00-10.30 GMT (16.00-17.30 Vietnam) |
| Application deadline | Monday 1 March 2021 |
| Evaluation process: Clarification questions to applicants and interviews (as appropriate and if necessary) | w/c 1 March 2021 |
| Successful applicants informed and grant agreements issued | w/c 8 March 2021 |
| Project and activity window | April 2021 – December 2021 |
| Programme evaluation | January 2022 – March 2022 |

Briefing session

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 ample time to put appropriate measures in place. All sessions will be run in English.

How to apply

Please complete and submit the accompanying Microsoft Word version of the application form. Please submit your application using the form and email it to digitalinnovation@britishcouncil.org.vn.

Application documents should include:

- Application Form
- Budget form

Applications should be submitted by **Monday 1 March 2021, 23.00 hours (GMT)**

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

If you have any questions about your application, please email digitalinnovation@britishcouncil.org.vn and allow at least three working days for a response.

Applications can be submitted through the form, with a written budget. 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.

Appendix

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' (<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/Publications/researchers/grc/>), the Inter Academy Partnership report 'Doing Global Science: A Guide to Responsible Conduct in the Global Research Enterprise' (<http://www.interacademycouncil.net/24026/29429.aspx>) or contact us for further guidance.

Safeguarding

We have a duty of care to safeguard the children and vulnerable adults we work with. Please refer to the Safeguarding policy here: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/how-we-work/policies/safeguarding>

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.

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: https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/equality_policy_1.doc

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 reserve 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.org or see our website: <http://www.britishcouncil.org/privacy-cookies/data-protection>

Payment of the grant

Any grant awarded as part of the 'Digital Learning Innovation Fund' will be paid in accordance with the agreed budget plan within 30 days of signature of the Grant Agreement on the condition of the approval by the British Council of a final report based on actual expenditure submitted by the Principal Applicants. The British Council reserve the rights to recover the full payment if the final report and supporting documents are not satisfactory, resulting in a reduction in costs or the terms and conditions of the Grant Agreement have not been adhered.

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.

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.