



## ILG research Bursary Proforma

April 2015.

(NB all boxes expand) (See pages 3 & 4 for instructions)

**1. Project Title (maximum 10 words)**

Public library digital participation programmes– the impact on employability

**2. Principal Investigator**

Dr. Lindsay McKrell, Team Leader for Libraries, Stirling Council Libraries, Library HQ, 6 Borrowmeadow Road, Springkerse Industrial Estate, Stirling FK& 7TN 01786 237537

**3. Co-Investigator(s)**

Gill Ross, Digital Inclusion Officer, Stirling Council Libraries

**4. Partner(s)**

Partners in Stirling Council Advice Services, DWP/JobCentre Plus and CAB. Research bid supported by SLIC and CILIPS.

**5. Summary of the project – If the project is funded, ILG will use this in any publicity material or announcements. (Maximum 300 words)**

This research will build on the work of a digital participation project called IT & Me, investigating its impact on the employability of both library users and volunteers. IT & Me was a joint project between Stirling and Clackmannanshire Libraries, funded by the Scottish Library and Information Council for 18 months.

A body of Digital Champion volunteers has been recruited, classes and computer clubs for the public are underway and staff training is ongoing. Volunteers receive a high level of support and training and Stirling Libraries and Archives recently had our respected Investing in Volunteers accreditation renewed for the next three years. Funding for IT & Me ran out in March 2017 but the post of Digital Inclusion Officer has been extended for a further three months during which the postholder will work full-time in Stirling Libraries.

In Stirling we have identified an impact on employability which we would like to investigate through action research. We would like the IT & Me Digital Inclusion Officer to extend and research work begun with unemployed and benefit claimants through DWP surgeries, CAB job clubs, CV and jobseeking workshops and advice drop-ins. We offer help with these partner-run activities hosted in libraries and critically, we offer ongoing support to the independent users thereafter. We build both digital and information literacy skills to enable jobseeking and income maximisation, identifying the hook that highlights the benefits of digital participation to each individual. This might include

making savings online, navigating fuel comparison sites, finding out what benefits they are due, exploring internet safety or discovering how to evaluate the glut of information available online.

A second strand of our research would concern volunteers. Several of our volunteers have gone on to find full-time work, some after long periods of searching. Specialised training and volunteering to enhance digital participation has taken their employability to a new level and we would like to explore this further. Their circumstances and skill levels would be very different from the majority of jobseekers attending our organised activities but if they have not been in full-time work regularly for one reason or another, volunteers can still face barriers to successfully securing employment themselves. Some volunteers have experienced physical or mental health difficulties and volunteering is a first step towards employment for them.

**6. Risk assessment – Please state any risks you envisage on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being low and 5 being a high risk**

Risks –

1. Lack of jobseeker numbers - 3. Hard to predict but DWP have promised referrals. Working with partner agencies should encourage attendance at our informal digital support activities linked to jobseeking. Demand is expected to rise from the end of June when the all-digital Universal Credit rollout is complete in Stirling and all new claimants will need PCs/tablets/smartphones to make a claim.
2. Lack of continuity with jobseekers or volunteers - 3. Follow up should still be possible and we are asking permission to contact those we have helped after they have moved on. Destination information might be available from partners.
3. Loss of Digital Inclusion Officer - 3. If our Digital Inclusion Officer was to leave we might have to delay and appoint someone in her place to complete the research.

**7. Stakeholders**

Jobseekers, benefit claimants and families

Partners – DWP/JobCentrePlus, Council Advice Services, CAB

Library staff and users, communities local to libraries with a Make IT Work project

Stirling Council

Volunteers

Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC)

Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals Scotland (CILIPS)

Good Things Foundation (formerly Tinder Foundation)

Carnegie UK Trust

**8. Aims and Objectives**

There are two main aims for this research.

The first is to establish the effect of digital support for employability in libraries on participants.

We will determine this by assessing participants' digital skills, confidence, frequency of internet use

and aspirations for the future when first attending our regular jobseeking drop-ins and again after they have attended several sessions.

The second aim is to establish whether working as a volunteer at library digital support activities has benefits for the volunteers by increasing their confidence, skills and employability. Similarly, this will be assessed when starting as a volunteer and two to three months later when they have had a chance to be trained and get involved.

## **9. Milestones**

### **Month 1 – Preparation**

Research similar projects

Recruit and train volunteers

Consult with volunteers regarding employability

Identify outcomes and indicators for evaluation

Prepare data gathering tools

Reach clients by promoting sessions in libraries

Ask partnership organisations for referrals

Identification of libraries with greatest jobseeking demand

Establish availability of local volunteers and partner organisations in the area

Work with library staff to outline project and viability

Estimate most effective time and format for library

Promote in library, on website, social media and local press.

Consult with learners to identify what they hope to gain

Liaise with partner organisations

### **Month 2 Sessions go Live – Pilot in Bannockburn**

Ask learners to fill in registration forms

Ask learners to sign up for research

Get learners involved in shaping Make IT Work by collecting initial feedback and consulting on their needs

Support volunteers

Ask volunteers to sign up for research

Volunteers identify gaps in their skills set to enhance their employability

Help volunteers to achieve awards such as SQA IN Volunteering Skills and Saltire Awards

Embed methods to collect feedback and gather data as we go

### **Month 3 Develop Sessions**

Evaluate feedback

Make adaptations to suit needs of learners, increasing skills in use of internet, digital device and information literacy

Prepare/adapt existing training materials if required

Compile case studies for learners and volunteers

Start up other Make IT Work in different branches

Interviews with library staff and partner organisations

### **Month 4 Assessment of Impact**

Final interviews

Assessment of results, conclusions drawn

Implications for developing work in libraries and enhancing partnership work

Reports and articles prepared and disseminated

## **10. Description (Maximum 1,000 words)**

### **Background**

In 2014/15 libraries found demand for digital support increasing quickly in two particular areas. The first was requests for help with tablets and mobile devices, often from elderly users. The second was for help with jobseeking, largely from users who had to use Universal Jobmatch online as part of their Claimant Commitment with the DWP and had not been online before.

Library staff faced two hurdles in meeting this demand themselves. They needed training to increase their confidence using new technology and they needed help on the ground. Not all staff were familiar with mobile devices and newer technologies. Staff are always keen to assist but help for jobseekers in particular could take an hour at a time if they were signing up for Universal Jobmatch. It was simply impossible to provide this help and run a busy library. Staff training and volunteer recruitment were therefore essential for the project which aimed to deliver informal, learner-centred IT help direct to library users.

### **Initial Funding**

We applied to SLIC for 18 months of funding for a Digital Inclusion Officer who could recruit, train and support digital champion volunteers and organise activities in libraries to encourage digital participation. In 2015 the Scottish Library and Information Council approved this post, shared between Stirling and Clackmannanshire Libraries. Funding also enabled the purchase of tablets, mifi devices and marketing for the project, which we jointly agreed to call IT & Me.

The title IT & Me reflects the importance of establishing a hook to encourage an individual to go online for the first time. Twenty per cent of the population still do not use the internet and they are hard to reach. Equally, promoting online opportunities might encourage individuals with experience using the internet to discover something new that would be particularly helpful to them. They might discover knitting patterns online, find out how to Skype a son abroad, or sign up for internet banking. SCVO research indicates that going online can save a household over £700 in one year alone. It increases access to health and citizenship information and might help people be more active in their community.

The Digital Inclusion Officer and myself took training in Essentials of Volunteer Management from Volunteer Scotland and used this to develop a new volunteer role – IT & Me Champions - with associated training and support. Rather than the traditional weekly IT classes offered in libraries, the project aimed to provide structured, themed digital training to the public where required and an informal, social computer club weekly thereafter. In each location, this would be run initially by the Digital Inclusion Officer with support from volunteers. Once established, the activities would be led by library staff with the same volunteer support.

### **Further Funding**

Funding for the initial IT & Me project came to an end in March and Clackmannanshire Libraries are no longer involved although we work together actively sharing training material and have volunteers in common. Because of demand, Stirling took the decision to extend the contract of the Digital Inclusion Officer for three months while we sought additional funding.

### **Research Bid**

As our digital participation activities have rolled out in libraries, we have identified increasing demand for help from jobseekers. Last year Stirling Libraries had 368 requests for CV help and 212 requests for job search help. We host partner organisations running jobclubs and job surgeries in libraries, both of which are busy. We are also expecting Universal Credit to roll out completely to Stirling at the end of June. This service will be fully digital for the first time and will apply to a wide range of benefits. This is likely to result in a spike in demand from benefit claimants and jobseekers attending and referred to libraries. We feel this is a particularly good time to examine the help libraries offer through digital support and the benefits this can bring.

We feel that the training and support we offer volunteers is of a particularly high quality and this is recognised by local forum Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise.

Accreditation for Volunteers in Coalfield communities is available locally and might enable volunteers to use the hours they work towards gaining a Scottish Vocational Qualifications module equivalent to a National Certificate, just below the level of a Higher. For some this might be the first qualification they have gained and we are eager to support volunteers to take up this opportunity and evaluate their experience.

Some of our volunteers have moved on to employment and feel that the training and support, plus the confidence gained from passing on skills has helped open up opportunities for them.

The work of libraries in programming digital participation training has been highlighted before. Crucially, its **impact** on employability and personal finance has not been explored. Identifying the effectiveness of this activity for both jobseekers and volunteers might raise the profile of libraries'

role in this area, and could lead to increased funding and rollout of the work. It may highlight the benefits of working with expert partners, using their skills combined with what libraries offer: a safe place, a trusted brand, no cost, skilled, friendly staff and continuity. We have significant footfall and a venue in every community. Digital skills training and support can extend to all or target those in need. Our model is worth considering on a larger scale.

Working with attenders of jobclubs and advice surgeries will allow us to build skills and confidence in users and perhaps encourage some of them to become volunteers. This will have long term impacts for them and their families.

For all the reasons above, we are now proposing a research bid into digital support for employability in libraries. As this seems to be a natural extension of IT & Me, we propose to call it Make IT Work.

As outlined above in the Aims and Objectives section, the research will have two strands:

The first will examine the benefits for job seekers and benefit claimants of digital support in libraries.

The second will examine how being a Digital Champion makes a difference to our volunteers.

### **Methodology**

Numbers attending in terms of jobseeker participants and volunteers directly involved will be recorded. It is hoped numbers will increase as the projects progresses and increases its profile in each community.

#### **Jobseekers**

We will register participants at jobclubs and at Make it Work digital support drop-ins in libraries. This will allow us to collect participants' details and their employment status at the time of joining the project.

We will ask them to complete a short survey to allow us to gather demographic information and ask their agreement for us to use that information anonymously and to contact them again.

We will complete a How Can We Help You form with participants. In this they can assess their own digital skills. They will rate this on a 1-5 scale where 1 is having little or no ability and 5 is very able. We also ask how often they use the internet – this may range from daily to less than once a month. We will ask how they feel about searching for employment online and what they would like to use the internet for. Finally we will ask about their plans for the future.

Two months later in a Follow Up form we will ask again about digital skills and frequency of internet use. We will ask what participants have learned from coming to the club, what difference this has made to them, and again, their plans for the future. We will also establish if they are still looking for work or if their situation has changed. This might include taking up volunteering or going into training or education.

In this way we hope to establish any progression in skills, confidence, status and aspirations through involvement with Make IT Work.

Jobclub participants may also move on to other opportunities in the library. IT & Me offer informal tablet classes for Ipad and Android devices as well as specialist sessions on energy comparison,

internet banking, Skype, social media and online shopping as well as access to free e-resources, including e-books, e-audio books and e-magazines. Partners from Adult Learning and the local college offer informal and structured courses and support for learning up to ECDL. There would be support from them to apply for financial assistance in the form of Independent Learner Accounts. In this way we can offer a route to people coming in with little confidence and few qualifications to build skills and improve their prospects and assess how things have changed for them beyond a simple yes/no of having achieved employment within the timescale of the project.

Similarly, those attending any of the activities outlined above may decide they want to look more actively for work and so start attending our Make IT Work jobclubs, updating their CVs and being signposted to partner organisations to update their interview skills.

## Volunteers

As far as volunteers are concerned, we will establish at our informal chat with volunteers new to the service what their experience of work and volunteering to date has been and what they hope for from this opportunity. We will also ask them to assess their digital skills and any areas where they feel they might need training.

Four months later we will meet with the volunteer and complete a Make IT Work Volunteer Catch Up form together. This will record their assessment about their skills and employability, ask how confidence and skills are now, what they have enjoyed and not enjoyed so far and what difference the volunteer role is making to them. Similar questions will be asked of those moving on in an Exit Interview.

## Partners

We will conduct an interview with a representative of each partner organization – CAB, DWP or separate Council service such as Advice and Adult Learning, to establish what benefits our partnership has for them. This will focus on the digital support to employability provided and the unique element libraries and library staff can bring.

## Staff

We will interview a member of staff in each of the venues where digital support for employability is being offered. This will focus on that person's view of demand, impact and any feedback that might have been given to them. We will ask if they feel libraries are a suitable venue for this activity and again, what the library and library staff can bring.

## Case Studies

Where a jobseeker or volunteer has been with the project for several months and has particularly relevant experience, we will ask if they would consent to a structured interview about what difference digital training and support has made to them.

## Conclusions

We will collate data to establish if there has been any progress in skills and confidence for jobseekers and volunteers. We will assess any changes in status for those involved and ascertain if they feel

that digital support in libraries has contributed to their employability and if there is any evidence to support this.

### **11. Dissemination strategy (maximum 500 words)**

We would liaise throughout the project with SLIC, CILIPS and the Scottish Government Digital Participation Directorate and hope that they might be interested in publicising the ongoing research and final results. SLIC were interested in the research bid and very supportive. I contacted the Scottish Government with a detailed outline of the proposal and asked if they would consider being partners in research and contributing to funding so that the research could extend over a longer period. They are interested in this request and have asked that I submit a business case.

We would meet with our Council Communications Department to outline the project and agree a plan to publicise. This would include press releases, promotion through our Council website, Council and Libraries Facebook and library Twitter account. We would recruit participants from our volunteers and by publicising at jobclubs and advice surgeries, in the libraries and communities concerned aiming to focus on case studies of successful jobseekers and volunteers.

Results of research could also be reported at Council Committee and throughout the Council internally, with a view to raising the profile of libraries and our work to increase digital participation and enhance information literacy.

Partners involved such as the DWP/JobCentre Plus, Volunteer Scotland, Stirling Council Advice Services and Adult Learning team and the CAB may disseminate details of the project to their own organization and contacts further afield.

We would publicise results in Update and national press, through the Information Literacy Community of Practice and through attendance at SLIC, CILIP and LILAC conferences.

### **12. Outputs**

The IT & Me Employability project would result in articles for eg. Library and Information Research Journals. I can commit to producing articles to be considered for publication in this way. I would also be keen to present the findings at CILIPS annual Conferences in Dundee in June or the Autumn Gathering in October as well as national CILIPS conference, LILAC and the PMLG annual conference.

I am now Team Leader for Stirling Libraries and as such attend regular meetings of Public Library Service Heads. Each local authority in Scotland has a Digital Champion representative and they meet three times a year at SLIC sponsored events to hear new initiatives and promote good practice. This would be an ideal forum to publicise our research findings and promote the ILG.

We would hope to produce recommendations for digital support to employability in libraries, particularly around the factors that make for successful partnerships, and the importance of training and support for volunteers.

Earlier project funding included Captivate software which should enable eg. Jobclub participants to do a video diary or make training materials including their direct experience of jobseeking, what they have learned and the benefits increased information literacy skills have brought them. These would be invaluable for the Council, partner agencies and other public libraries throughout the UK.



### **13. Evaluation strategy**

As outlined in Research Methodology above, evaluation of progress made will be by

Recording numbers attending throughout the project

“Before and after” forms completed by jobclub participants

“Before and after” forms completed by volunteers

Case studies from each group

Interviews with partners

Interviews with library staff

Progress and comments will be recorded and conclusions drawn for future plans and possible rollout to other libraries and interested library services elsewhere in the country.

We would hope that it might be possible to secure longer-term funding for the Digital Inclusion Officer, especially if this project is successful.

As Libraries Team Leader, I am currently undertaking a restructure of the service which includes setting up a new Digital Services Team. Gill will be a part of this and securing ongoing funding for her post is a priority for me.

### **14. Financial breakdown**

We are applying for a further four months of funding for our Digital Inclusion Officer. Her yearly salary including on-costs is £28,000. For four months this would be £9333. Her current contract runs out in June so the funding would run from then. I am applying for additional funding from the Scottish Government and hope it might be possible to extend the research through them so that it runs for a longer period.

Any travel, subsistence or conference fees for myself and the Digital Inclusion Officer would be funded from mainstream library budgets.

## ILG research bursary proforma - instructions

### General comments

When writing your text, please be as concise and clear as possible. Write your bid for intelligent non-expert, avoid jargon, acronyms and abbreviations. Make sure that your bid addresses as many criteria as possible as specified in the call document. All word limits are to be strictly observed – exceeding the limit specified will automatically disqualify the application.

Where sections do not apply e.g., Co-Investigator please insert 'N/A'.

#### 1. Project Title

Short and imaginative titles are preferred that capture the imagination and convey the essence of the project.

#### 2. Principal Investigator

Please insert your full name, job title, affiliation, postal address, telephone number and email address. **The Principal investigator must be a member of the ILG.**

#### 3. Co-Investigator(s)

These will be colleague(s) who will share the doing of the research and will incur their own costs. Please insert full name, job title, affiliation, postal address, telephone number and email address of all co-investigators

#### 4. Partners

These will be individuals or organisation involved in the research but not actually carrying it out and therefore do not incur a cost. These could be 'research buddies' (academics or researchers you have enlisted to help with the methodology, etc.). Please insert full name, job title, affiliation, postal address, telephone number and email address of all co-investigators

#### 5. Summary of the project

If the project is funded ILG will use this in any publicity material or announcements. (Maximum 300 words)

This is to be written in an informal style to communicate the project to the wider community and media.

#### 6. Risk assessment

Please state any risks you envisage on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being low and 5 being a high risk

#### 7. Stakeholders

This is anyone who might have a direct interest or who may benefit from the project – for example school children, teachers or business owners etc.

#### 8. Aims and Objectives

These should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely) objectives that meet funders' criteria

#### 9. Milestones

This is the detail of the project plan and can be in the form of a simple Gantt chart.

#### 10. Description (Maximum 1,000 words)

This is the candidates opportunity to explain the project in more detail and could address issues such

as why this project and why now? Also how the project will be carried out.

11. Dissemination strategy (maximum 500 words)

How will you make sure that your work and its findings reaches the widest possible audience? This might include all or some of the following: seminars, blogs, webinars, conference papers, press releases, YouTube etc.

12. Outputs

These are tangible artefacts such as webpages, blogs, a learning and teaching resource, peer reviewed journal articles, books, book chapters and so on.

13. Evaluation strategy (maximum 500 words)

The evaluation strategy should seek to answer the following questions:

How will progress of the project be monitored?

To what extent were the project objectives met?

What was the impact of the project?

What is the added value of the project?

14. Financial breakdown

This will include:

Amount requested and why for example, salary costs, travel and subsistence and conference fees.

This should be in the form of an itemised list of each separate cost. Maximum allowed £10,000, in practice we anticipate bids for smaller amounts than this.

**If you have further queries about this form please contact:**

Dr Geoff Walton: [geoff.walton@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:geoff.walton@northumbria.ac.uk)

Andrew Walsh: [a.p.walsh@hud.ac.uk](mailto:a.p.walsh@hud.ac.uk)

**Please return this form to: [cilipilg@gmail.com](mailto:cilipilg@gmail.com)**

**Deadline for bids: 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015 and 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015**

**Successful candidates will be notified during August 2015 and January 2016**

**It is envisaged that projects will start between August 2015 and March 2016**