Compare responses to this question in the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists application form:

'What is the need, challenge or inequality that you plan to address through this project: why is it needed now?'

300 words

Applicant 1

Charities and small not-for-profits in London are increasingly expected to deliver vital services against a backdrop of rising demand and constrained resources. However, many lack the **digital capabilities, data infrastructure and strategic expertise** needed to operate efficiently, innovate their services, and measure impact effectively. This capacity gap has created an inequality within the sector: organisations with limited tech skills or outdated systems are **less able to harness data, automate processes, and integrate digital tools** that unlock operational efficiencies and improve beneficiary outcomes. Without support now, this gap will widen further as digital expectations increase across funders, partners, and the communities charities serve.

The urgency of this challenge is underscored by recent pressures on the voluntary sector, where charities are adapting to remote delivery, expanding digital services, and trying to personalise support using data — yet many organisations report limited skills and resources to do so sustainably. This limits their ability to scale services, compete for funding, attract skilled volunteers, and deliver evidence-led impact.

Our project aims to directly address this inequality by equipping a cohort of London-based charities with **practical digital and data capability development**, underpinned by hands-on support and tailored IT solutions. We will deliver training and tools that help organisations streamline operations, adopt effective data practices, and make strategic decisions informed by analytics. This will reduce duplication, enhance service quality, and improve outcomes for beneficiaries — particularly those most affected by social and economic disadvantage.

By focusing on **capacity-building through IT, digital and data support**, our project aligns with WCIT's mission to help charities get the best out of technology and ensures that smaller organisations are not left behind in an increasingly digital sector.

Applicant 2

London's voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations are facing a growing digital capability gap that is directly limiting their ability to meet community needs at a time of rising demand. Many small charities lack the skills, systems and confidence to harness technology effectively, leaving them unable to modernise services, use data to improve outcomes, or adopt digital tools that could increase efficiency and reach. This challenge has become more urgent as financial pressures intensify and more support moves online, widening inequalities for both organisations and the people they serve.

WCIT's priority area of *"Tech for charities"* highlights the need for innovative, scalable IT approaches that create efficiencies, improve beneficiary outcomes and can be replicated across the wider charity sector. Our project responds directly to this by equipping small London charities—particularly those with limited budgets and no in-house IT expertise—with the practical skills, tools and confidence needed to adopt technology safely and effectively.

Digital inclusion is also a core WCIT focus area, which emphasises addressing barriers to accessibility and ensuring high social return on investment. When frontline organisations lack digital capability, their beneficiaries—many already experiencing disadvantage—face reduced access to support, less efficient services, and fewer opportunities to engage digitally.

Now is a critical moment for intervention. The WCIT guidance notes that funded projects should demonstrate innovative use of IT, be scalable for the VCSE sector, and be sustainable over time. Our project meets these expectations by providing hands-on capacity building, tailored digital and data support, and sector-wide learning resources designed for replication across multiple boroughs.

Without targeted investment, the digital divide between well-resourced charities and small grassroots groups will continue to grow—risking long-term inequality in service quality, operational resilience and community impact. WCIT support would enable us to close this gap by ensuring London's charities can get the best out of IT and deliver stronger, more efficient and more inclusive services.

Applicant 3

London's voluntary sector faces a widening digital divide: many small and medium charities know that better use of tech, data and digital could transform their impact, but lack the skills, capacity and confidence to make this a reality. This project addresses that gap by providing targeted, hands-on support so charities can plan, implement and embed the right IT solutions, rather than piecemeal fixes that quickly become obsolete.

The need

- Many charities supporting those most at risk of exclusion still rely on legacy systems, manual processes and insecure data practices, which undermine service quality, outcomes measurement and safeguarding.

- Sector funders increasingly expect robust digital infrastructure, data insight and online delivery, yet frontline organisations rarely have access to strategic IT advice or project management expertise.

The challenge

- Off-the-shelf consultancy is often unaffordable or not tailored to the realities of small charities, leading to failed implementations and wasted investment.

- Without trusted, independent guidance, charities struggle to scope requirements, procure appropriate tools, and build staff skills to sustain change, limiting the scalability and sustainability that WCIT prioritises.

Why it is urgent now

- Demand for digital and hybrid services, accelerated by the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, is now embedded in how Londoners access information, advice and support.

- At the same time, rapid developments in data, AI and automation risk leaving smaller organisations further behind, precisely when they are most needed to support communities facing economic and digital hardship.

By focusing on "IT for charities" and building practical, repeatable models of support, this project will help London charities get the **best** out of IT in ways that are impactful now and sustainable beyond the life of the grant.

Applicant 4

Every day, we see small charities and community groups across London working incredibly hard with limited time, limited budgets and—too often—limited digital confidence. As more services, funding processes and community interactions move online, the gap between what these organisations *need* to do and what they *feel able* to

do is widening. This is creating real inequality: charities without the right digital and data skills risk being left behind, offering less efficient services and reaching fewer people at a time when demand is increasing.

Superhighways has supported small charities for over 25 years, helping more than 469 groups and 714 individuals in the past year alone through training, advice and hands-on technical support. We know from our everyday work that organisations aren't short on motivation—they're short on capacity, digital know-how and someone to guide them through practical, affordable solutions. Our experience developing data dashboards, providing one-to-one advice and delivering 177 training sessions last year shows that targeted support can transform how charities plan, deliver and evidence their work.

This is exactly the challenge WCIT highlights in its *Tech for charities* priority: encouraging organisations to pilot innovative IT that improves efficiency, enhances beneficiary outcomes and can scale across the wider VCSE sector. WCIT also emphasises digital inclusion and the need for projects that deliver strong social value, particularly for groups facing barriers to digital access. Our frontline insight aligns with this perfectly—when charities lack digital capability, the communities they serve feel the impact first.

This project is needed now because the sector is at a tipping point. Charities are navigating rising demand, tighter resources and rapid digital change. Without timely, skilled support, the inequality between digitally confident and digitally excluded charities will only deepen. With WCIT's backing, we can help London's grassroots organisations get the best out of IT—strengthening their services, unlocking the power of their data and improving outcomes for the communities they care about most.

Applicant 5

Across London, small charities are working flat out amid rising demand, but a widening digital capability gap is limiting their ability to plan, deliver and evidence services. The Charity Digital Skills Report 2025 shows the sector under pressure: only **44%** of charities now have a digital strategy (down from 50% last year), while **69%** say strained finances are the biggest barrier to digital progress—even as **76%** report using AI, often without confident governance or leadership skills to match. This picture is starker for smaller organisations, the majority of which are at early stages with digital and lag on data, cybersecurity and systems upgrades. [charitydig...ills.co.uk], [charitydig...ills.co.uk] [charitydig...ills.co.uk]

Superhighways exists to change that. For more than 25 years we've helped London's grassroots groups build practical digital and data skills backed by fit-for-purpose tech—supporting **469** organisations and **714** individuals last year, delivering **177** training

sessions and hands-on advice, and developing tools such as interactive dashboards to help charities plan and demonstrate impact. We know these groups aren't short on motivation; they're short on capacity, confidence and a trusted guide to help them adopt safe, affordable solutions quickly. [wcitcharity.org.uk]

WCIT's priorities align directly with this need. Under **Tech for charities**, WCIT seeks innovative IT that creates efficiencies, improves beneficiary outcomes, and is scalable across the VCSE sector; under **Inclusion**, it welcomes projects that address digital accessibility and deliver high social value. WCIT also looks for projects that are sustainable and replicable—criteria our capacity-building model is designed to meet through reusable resources, sector-wide learning and pro-bono leverage. [superhighways.org.uk] [communitys...thwark.org]

Why now? The sector is at a tipping point: financial pressures, rapid tech change and rising expectations mean organisations must level up digital skills and governance or risk falling behind, with communities feeling the impact first. With WCIT's support, Superhighways will close the capability gap—helping more London charities "get the best out of IT," strengthen services, and turn data and digital into better outcomes for the people they serve.

[See prompts in presentation slides as appropriate]