

Harnessing Technology Grant: Guidance to schools and local authorities

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This guidance document explains the nature and purpose of the Harnessing Technology Grant, and provides advice to schools and local authorities on how best to maximise the impact of their investment in ICT.

1 About the funding

Previous grants

The new Harnessing Technology Grant repackages the previously available separate grants for ICT for 2007 to 2008:

- 121 national digital infrastructure grants for schools
- 122 e-learning credits (eLCs)

This funding, alongside other funding available for ICT (see below), is made available to support schools in delivering the priorities of the government's Harnessing Technology strategy (see Section 3 for more details of this). The grant is managed by Becta and is paid to local authorities through the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Standards Fund mechanism for distribution to maintained schools in their area. This includes those schools, such as academies and voluntary aided schools that might receive some or all of their funding via other routes.

Previously, local authorities were required to provide revenue match funding for the national digital infrastructure grant. There is no match funding requirement associated with the Harnessing Technology Grant. However, it is recommended that local authorities contribute revenue funding in line with previous years, and/or consult with their schools about the use of school revenue budgets where this is considered appropriate.

Other funding available for technology

Maintaining and developing technology in schools involves both capital costs (eg for ICT hardware) and revenue costs (eg for technical support services, software subscriptions etc). The Harnessing Technology Grant is one source of funding that can be used for capital spending on technology-related priorities. Schools and local authorities can use other appropriate funding streams (such as the School Development Grant) to address revenue costs, and other capital expenditure on technology (eg Devolved Formula Capital).

Some local authorities will have received notification of an addition to their 2008-09 Harnessing Technology Grant funding under the heading "Other ICT". This is in the form of supported borrowing and is available to authorities currently in receipt of Computers for Pupils (CfP) funding. It has been made available to help those authorities complete delivery of the CfP programme or to continue to fund CfP connectivity for an additional year. It is at the discretion of an individual authority as

to whether they wish to utilise this source of funding or not. It is available for the first year (2008-09) of the three year allocation. For more information on supported borrowing, please see the [Harnessing Technology Grant - Frequently asked questions section](http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?rid=14501) [http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?rid=14501] on Becta's Schools website.

How the Harnessing Technology Grant is distributed

The funding is distributed to schools via local authorities, through the Standards Fund.

Local authorities are able to retain up to 25 per cent (or more with the explicit agreement of their Schools Forum) of their allocation centrally to undertake collaborative purchasing on behalf of all schools where improved value for money can be achieved, including the provision of broadband through regional broadband consortia or their approved suppliers.

Local authorities investing in ICT infrastructure should be aware of any ongoing revenue costs resulting from the capital investment, and plan the use of both their capital and revenue resources accordingly. It is recommended that local authorities contribute revenue funding in line with previous years (eg to cover the revenue costs of broadband connectivity), and/or consult with their schools about the use of school revenue budgets where this is considered appropriate.

With the agreement of schools in their area, local authorities can retain a further proportion of the funding where there is evidence that this will achieve efficiencies from collaborative approaches to procurement such as regionally or local authority wide deployed learning platforms where the majority of local authorities have secured improved value for money.

Use of capital

The Harnessing Technology Grant can be used to support purchases of ICT infrastructure and equipment or upgrades, and software and digital curriculum resources where these count as capital expenditure. According to the Department for Children, Schools and Families, **capital expenditure** involves “the acquisition of productive assets that will have a life longer than the financial year they were purchased in”¹[1]. By contrast, **revenue expenditure** involves payment for items or services which are necessary for maintaining capacity in relation to the activity of the organisation, and which are “consumed” within the year of their purchase.

¹[1] DCSF Consistent Financial Reporting guidance (http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/valueformoney/docs/VFM_Document_208.pdf)

De minimus limits, agreed locally, mean that small value assets are written off in the year they are acquired. These are not capitalised and are treated as revenue expenditure.

These definitions are derived from Financial Reporting Standards - specifically FRS15 which relates to Tangible Fixed Assets, and FRS10 which concerns Intangible Fixed Assets. All Government entities, whether Central Government or Local Government, are required to comply with these standards.

Determining whether a prospective purchase counts as a capital asset will depend on the particular circumstances and context. Local authority finance teams interpret accounting principles and have a key role in defining what counts as an appropriate use of capital funding. If schools and local authorities are in doubt as to whether a technology-related product or service should be paid for out of capital budgets, they can consult with their local authority finance teams who can offer a view on the matter.

Nonetheless, the definition of capital expenditure derived from Financial Reporting Standards means that in general, capital funding can be used to pay for **ICT infrastructure** if:

- the asset acquired improves the activity of the school or local authority, rather than simply maintaining it;
AND
- the asset has a productive lifespan beyond the financial year in which it was purchased;
AND
- the asset acquired adds to, rather than merely maintains the value of existing fixed assets.

The definition of capital expenditure means that capital funding can be used to pay for **software** if:

- the product purchased has a productive lifespan beyond the financial year in which it was purchased. This means that following payment, the school or local authority either has outright ownership of the product or a licence to use the product; or has a licence to use the product for a specified time period which is longer than one year.

A number of commercial companies supply digital learning resources to schools on what is often referred to as a “subscription” basis – in other words, where the school makes a payment which enables them to access and use a range of digital curriculum materials for a specified time period (with new resources being provided

to them as these are published). The capital nature of the Harnessing Technology Grant means that it **can** be used to pay for such services, but only if the terms and conditions of the service mean that either:

- the assets being paid for (or a perpetual licence to use those assets) pass into the ownership of the school or local authority at the end of the service period
- OR
- the school or local authority receives a licence to use the digital curriculum materials for a specified time period which is longer than one year.

Maximising the impact of your investment in ICT

The Harnessing Technology Grant gives schools and local authorities greater control over their ICT spending to meet local and national priorities - it is essential that schools and local authorities exploit technology to support learning and the effective operation of the schools in the local authority area.

In considering how to maximise the investment, all schools should:

- Be clear about the potential of ICT; understand how it is currently being deployed and managed; ensure regular review and updating of all policies and practices; and develop an effective strategy to move forward. Becta's [self-review framework](http://www.becta.org.uk/schools/selfreview) [http://www.becta.org.uk/schools/selfreview] will help schools audit, assess and plan how to move forward.
 - Use the framework to audit the current status with ICT and undertake an initial review of the impact of ICT within school.
 - Then follow this up with an understanding of how you take ICT forward by reviewing the leadership and management approach in school.

(These two areas will give a clear understanding of the areas for attention to improve learner outcomes, as well as indicating where changes to leadership and management strategies will give the biggest gains).

- To maintain the impetus, return to Becta's self-review framework to focus on specific areas (for example professional development or extended learning) and also to review overall progress regularly as part of a systematic approach to exploiting ICT.
- Ensure that due attention is given to the emerging and key agenda of providing access, for learners and parents. Access to ICT can support the development of key life skills and improve the engagement and motivation of individual pupils, access at home could support a school's plans to improve parental engagement; attitudes to learning of particular groups of pupils; the attendance and behaviour of targeted pupils; communication between pupils and between home and school and the engagement of parents in learning, and development of parents' skills, perhaps in collaboration with UK Online Centres.
 - Review current learning platform provision and plans using Becta's [functional and technical requirements documents](http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=lv&catcode=ss_lv_lp_03&rid=12884) [http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=lv&catcode=ss_lv_lp_03&rid=12884] to ensure they are fit for purpose.

- Encourage teachers to create new resources on the learning platform and to transfer existing resources there.
- Encourage teachers to include opportunities for using ICT at home when planning programmes of work and setting homework.
- Take full advantage of parents' ICT access to help them understand better how their child is getting on at school and what he or she needs to do next to make progress. There is potential here for an ongoing flow of information between school and parent; and certainly a channel for improving the quality of dialogue between the school, parent and learner.
- Provide access for learners and teachers to online learning resources through membership of the UK Access Management Federation and the use of simplified sign on.
- Thinking both about the advent of diplomas and universal home access, consider what (if any) changes will be needed to school network infrastructure to support both access to learning resources and pupil data remotely and outside normal working hours.
- Provide a safe and secure environment and experience for learners, staff and parents.
 - Use a whole-establishment approach towards responsibility for e-safety, embedded in the thinking of staff, pupils and parents
 - Develop [an acceptable use policy \(AUP\)](http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=is&catcode=ss_to_es_pp_aup_03&rid=11087) [http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=is&catcode=ss_to_es_pp_aup_03&rid=11087] detailing the ways staff, pupils and all network users (including parents) can and cannot use ICT facilities - sample AUPs are available both online and via local authorities and can be tailored to fit local circumstances. Link AUPs with other school policies, such as anti-bullying and guidance on copyright and plagiarism
 - Designate a senior management team member with responsibility for safeguarding to also be the central contact point for all [e-safety issues](http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=is) [http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=is]. However, headteachers, supported by governors, should take the lead in embedding the agreed [e-safety policies](#)

- [http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=is&catcode=ss_to_es_p_pol_03] in practice
- Ensure the young people are aware of potential risks, demonstrate safe, responsible behaviour, wherever and whenever they are online
 - Ensure the infrastructure is as safe and secure as possible by using a [Becta Accredited Internet Service Provider](#) [http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=re&catcode=ss_res_pro_bps_int_04].
 - Review how effectively management information systems (MIS) and [learning platforms](#) [<http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?rid=12887>] are used, deployed and developed to improve in-school efficiencies and effectiveness and provide the best and right information to staff, learners and parents.
 - Consider how [technology is used to inform parents](#) [<http://www.becta.org.uk/schools/parentalengagement>] of their children's achievements, including parents and learners having secure access to information online.
 - Review what access staff have to learner information and how are they able to access it, including the range of learner data and how frequently it is updated and how staff are supported in helping them to add, amend and analyse learner data.
 - Ensure that access to learner data is available to those that need it wherever they need it, and securely.
 - Be clear how data held in the school data management system is kept accurate and up to date; how it is protected and who has the necessary permission to access and amend it.
 - Look at the many different ways of capturing learner data (eg computer marked assessments, voting technologies, usage tracking technologies) and of providing information for parents (eg text messaging, emails, website, online access, learning platforms etc).
 - Ensure investment is fit for purpose and value for money. Technology is a strategic asset. Maximising its potential and [achieving best value](#) [http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=re&catcode=ss_res_pro_gb]

v_03] from often substantial investments demands careful planning and thoughtful collaboration. Becta provides schools and local authorities with simple advice on purchasing ICT. There is a range of EU-compliant buying arrangements underpinned by functional and technical specifications developed to support educational ICT. These help schools compare suppliers and guarantee high quality products and services specifically selected to meet educational needs.

- To ensure the best possible solutions for the best possible cost, access up to the minute, best practice [advice for procurement](http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=re&catcode=ss_res_pro_02) [http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=re&catcode=ss_res_pro_02].
- Look to collaborate with other schools to aggregate purchasing requirements. Becta recommends that purchasing should not be done by individual schools, but by a larger group, such as the local authority, to achieve best value. Many schools are already benefitting from this [collaborative approach](http://publications.becta.org.uk/display.cfm?resID=35291) [http://publications.becta.org.uk/display.cfm?resID=35291].
- Follow best practice in IT Technical Support by implementing a structured management process such as Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) or Becta's [Framework for ICT Technical Support \(FITS\)](http://www.becta.org.uk/schools/fits) [http://www.becta.org.uk/schools/fits].
- Ensure that you consider sustainability /environmental issues when preparing and implementing ICT plans and that appropriate thought is given to building infrastructure to support this new provision and minimise carbon emissions (electricity consumption).

2 Building an e-confident education system: the Harnessing Technology Strategy

The Harnessing Technology Strategy sets the broader context for local authority and school spending on ICT. Sponsored by DCSF and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and developed in consultation with 2000 leaders and practitioners, the Strategy aims to support national education and skills priorities by building an education and skills system that has the capacity to harness technology effectively for the benefit of learners. The goal is a system which is consistently 'e-confident' and where the following features are in place:

Personalised learning

- **High quality digital resources**, matched to learners' needs, are available wherever and whenever learning takes place.
- **Technology platforms** enable learners to pursue flexible learning pathways which are responsive to their individual needs.
- Technology supports **personalised, formative assessment** of learners' progress and achievement.

Engaged and empowered learners

- All learners have equitable access to learning services through a range of **universally-available technologies**.
- A range of **technology-enabled information, advice and guidance services** help provide choice to learners and parents/carers.
- **Technology-enabled supporting systems** help individuals secure the assistance they need to enter or remain in learning, and work to identify and intervene when learners are at risk of dropping out.

Effective, responsive and technology-confident education providers

- Technology resources and tools are available and used by practitioners in ways that impact positively on learner outcomes.
- All education providers become technology-mature, self-improving organisations that listen and respond to the views of learners and parents/carers on the use of technology to support learning.

An enabling technology infrastructure

- **Joined-up information systems** support data and information sharing and connected services that deliver consistent and personalised services for learners and education providers.
- Learners and practitioners have **access to world-class resources**, and arrangements are in place to facilitate the collaborative development of technology-based content and services.

Effective system leadership

- Leaders have an evidence-informed vision for learning, combined with **deep understanding of the potential of technology**, the knowledge and skills to lead major change, and a commitment to spreading innovation and effective practice in the use of technology.

The Harnessing Technology Strategy outlines the actions and activities required at all levels to bring about a system which has these features. It also identifies five areas that should be prioritised in taking the strategy forward, at both national and local levels:

- achieving universal access at home through learning platforms
- supporting disadvantaged groups
- providing professional tools for teachers
- networking leaders to drive the dissemination of effective practice and innovation
- supporting the integration of personal devices in school systems.

Funding allocated to local authorities and schools through the Harnessing Technology Grant is intended to help develop the e-confident system. Ultimately all proposed purchases made using the Harnessing Technology Grant should benefit learners and the educational process, and be guided by local needs in the context of the aims and priorities of the national Harnessing Technology Strategy.

Annex

Grant allocation

Becta and the DCSF have jointly determined the basis on which local authorities are allocated the Harnessing Technology Grant. Allocations are made using a combination of pupil numbers, deprivation and sparsity (a measure of relative population density to recognise the different costs of connectivity). The formula for allocations over this spending review period is:

	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Pupil numbers	67%	60%	60%
Index of Multiple Deprivation	5%	15%	20%
Sparsity	28%	25%	20%

Allocations by local authority can be found on the [Teachernet website](#).

Previously, funding for technology has been calculated using a combination of school numbers, pupil numbers and sparsity indicator, depending on the particular grant. The Harnessing Technology Grant allocations are calculated using a combination of pupil numbers, a sparsity indicator and a deprivation indicator (the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004). These changes are to help support personalisation, closing the attainment gap and the move towards universal access to technology. We are retaining the use of a certain level of sparsity to calculate funding allocations to ensure that rural schools can continue to achieve the same levels of bandwidth as those schools in more urban areas. In addition, an extra £75m has been allocated to local authorities in 2007-08 on the basis of their relative sparsity, to assist with the transition to the new formula for technology funding.

In order to manage losses that some local authorities will see due to the changes in the calculation, the balance between pupil numbers, sparsity and deprivation will shift over the three years of the settlement as follows:

	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Pupil numbers	67%	60%	60%
Index of Multiple Deprivation	5%	15%	20%
Sparsity	28%	25%	20%

Further to this, no local authority will see a reduction in funding of more than 10 per cent in 2008-2009, 15 per cent in 2009-2010 and 20 per cent in 2010-2011.