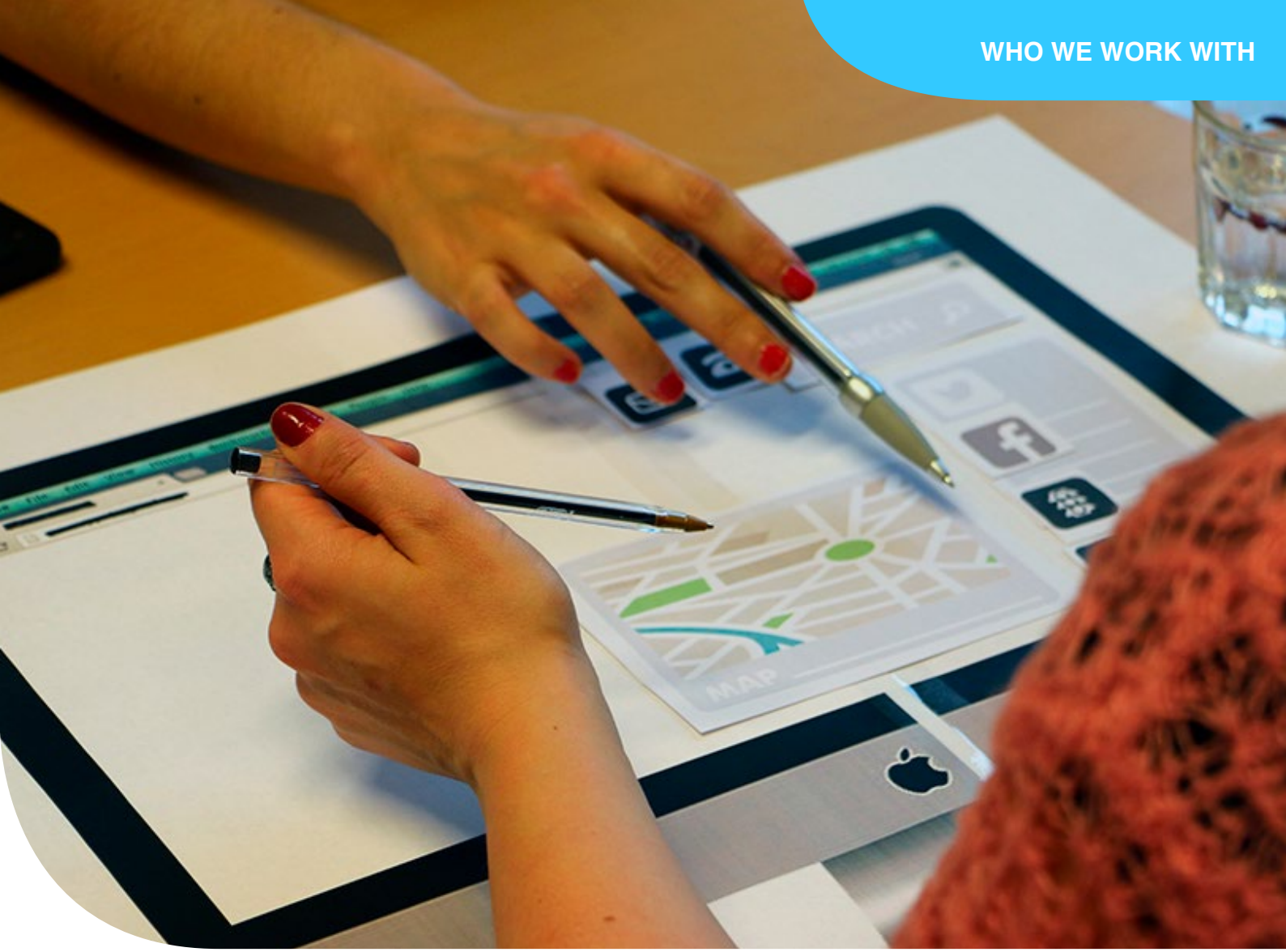
TECH FOR GOOD: THEORY OF CHANGE NARRATIVE

Version 1: 08.11.2017

In October 2017, the team behind the Tech for Good programme at Comic Relief and Paul Hamlyn Foundation worked with the agency inFocus Enterprises Ltd to develop a theory of change for the programme. Theory of change is a technique for mapping out the problem that a programme addresses, the activities that work towards addressing the problem, the outcomes that are anticipated to result from the activities and the assumptions that sit behind the overall theory of change. This narrative is one of two documents relating to the Tech for Good theory of change and you can view the second document, our 1-page summary theory of change, below.

You can find more information about the projects we fund at the Tech for Good programme website here: http://techforgoodhub.co.uk.



WHO WE WORK WITH

This section describes the individuals and organisations we work with as part of the Tech for Good programme, broken down across three groups:

I. Participants

There are two main types of participant that take part in the Tech for Good Programme:

- **Not-for-profits funded through the Tech for Good Programme** that are ready to develop digital projects and are interested in delivering more ambitious and impactful services to their beneficiaries.
- **Beneficiaries:** People using/ accessing the improved digital product or service delivered by Tech for Good grantee organisations. This could include people that are marginalised and in vulnerable and difficult situations, in poverty and experiencing inequality.

II. Active Stakeholders

Active stakeholders are the organisations and individuals that provide support to the not-for-profits involved in the Tech for Good programme. This includes:

- The **Tech for Good Advisor** takes a central role in helping not-for-profits to find the right expert (see below) and also provides expert advice in their own right, where appropriate.
- **Experts** offer additional advice to not-for-profits in relation to their digital project across a range of areas of expertise (e.g. user research or legal advice). Not-for-profits can work with the Tech for Good Advisor to access expert support.
- **Digital partners** are the digital agencies (or design agencies with a digital team/ expertise) contracted by the not-for-profit to develop the digital product or service.
- **Tech for Good Programme Funders:** In 2015, Comic Relief piloted a range of initiatives under the banner of Tech for Good. Building on their success, in October 2016, Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Comic Relief joined forces to support the Tech for Good programme.
- **Evaluators** conducting external evaluations of the Tech for Good Programme, currently looking at the efficacy of the support provided to projects.

III. Wider Stakeholders (the tech for good ecosystem)

We support the growth of a wider tech for good ecosystem through sharing our learning, engaging in key networks and advocating for and publicising the benefits of using digital services, products and ways of working. This ecosystem includes:

- **Decision makers in the wider not-for-profit sector in the UK** that are not involved in tech for good.
- **Decision makers within funders** that are not funding tech for good projects and existing tech for good funders that could get more involved and increase their funding.
- **Potential digital partners and experts**: the partners and experts that could get involved in the Tech for Good programme in future, or more widely within the tech for good ecosystem.
- **General public** being made aware that not-for-profits can do technology well and are relevant to the future
- **Governments (local and central) and the public sector** that could see the not-for-profit sector as a modern and relevant partner.

THE CHALLENGE

Many not-for-profits are not reaching their potential to deliver bigger, better and more innovative services to their beneficiaries. Digital projects often get started but lack sector buy-in, sufficient follow-on funding or business planning to take them to scale or be sustained beyond initial start-up funding. Alternatively, digital projects are not attempted or started.

Causes of the Challenge

There are a number of causes of this challenge which in most cases could apply both to funders and the not-for-profits they support, including:

1) **Lack of raw skills, experience and confidence with key digital concepts,** such as agile development processes and build, test and learn cycles.
2) **Lack of buy-in amongst leadership/management** and lack of understanding of the potential of digital and where it could be most useful for the organisation and its context. There can also be a reliance on an individual or small team to deliver the digital project, which can leave the project at risk to staff turnover.
3) **Lack of understanding of the different requirements of digital projects** (e.g. uncertainty about associated costs and reasonable measures of progress over time).
4) **Perception of risk around digital projects** with fear amongst not-for-profits and funders that prevent them from developing and supporting digital projects.
5) **Challenges in partnership**, where not-for-profits may not know where to go for digital support and the different language and terminology used by not-for-profits and their digital partners can sometimes make working together difficult.
6) **All of the above contributes to a lack of suitable funding structures** to support tech for good projects (e.g. funding that allows for innovation and iterative development). This only serves to reinforce issues 1-5.

Effects of the Challenge

There are also a number of effects of the main challenge we address through the Tech for Good programme, including:

1) **Opportunities being missed for a digital transformation** within not-for-profits that would increase the impact of their work.
2) **A waste of time, money and resources with unsuccessful digital projects** that are not stopped early enough.
3) **A relative dearth of successful digital demonstration projects** to inspire other not-for-profits and funders to get involved in tech for good.
4) **The technology innovation space is surrendered to the private sector.**
5) **The perception of technology being a risk** continues with both not-for-profits and funders, and investment is perceived to be harder to justify.

WHAT WE DO

This section describes the activities we run, and support we provide, through the Tech for Good programme:

Grant funding: We provide funding of up to £47k over 9 months via an open funding programme to support not-for-profits to develop digital products and services that help to solve social problems. There is a separate budget for additional expertise to be brought in, based on the guidance of the Tech for Good advisor. It is a requirement that projects work with a digital partner.

Bootcamp: An essential part of the Tech for Good programme is a two-day bootcamp, at which all the team members running digital projects and the active stakeholders (Tech for Good funders, advisors and key experts), gather in one place to meet one another, learn and plan. The camp is the opportunity for the different project teams to meet, swap stories and generally collaborate throughout the sessions. In 2017, the Bootcamp covered the following topics:

- Prioritised assumptions and risks
- Tools for working in an iterative and agile way
- Outline initial backlog of work
- Agree on way of sharing your progress
- Identify research plan to test that work is meeting the needs of the users.

Ongoing support from advisors and experts (both paid for and voluntary mentoring) across a range of areas including: research, legal support (e.g. open source and intellectual property), contracts, agile project management, user research, financial modelling and design. Recommendations for the expertise required and which experts to consult is channelled through the Tech for Good Advisor, who can also offer advice, where appropriate.

Advocacy/ publicity for tech for good through funder breakfasts, website creation and publications, supporting tech for good sector awards, showcasing of projects and stimulating thinking through calls for proposals (and publishing long-lists to make ideas more visible).

Sharing learning and networking through networking events, such as the wrap-up event, where participants in the projects could be introduced to new funders and service commissioners. We also seek to create a sense of a cohort and help to share information and learning between projects throughout the development of the digital product and service, for example through the setting up of a Slack channel, the circulation of weekly notes about progress, learning and focus for the week and regular online 'show and tells'.

In addition we have supported key pieces of research about the tech for good ecosystem including Shift's work on social tech milestones http://bit.ly/socialtechreport. We are currently funding an initiative called 'Good Tech Lab' and have commissioned research on social tech ecosystems in Sub Saharan Africa. We also speak and share learning at sector events, such as the Association of Charitable Foundations, and support internal learning at Comic Relief and PHF.

OUTCOMES: PARTICIPANTS

This section details the outcomes that are anticipated to result from the Tech for Good programme for participants in the short, medium and long-term.

Short-Term

In the short-term, not-for-profits work with their digital partners to develop a digital product or service and, in the process, they improve their knowledge across a range of areas. This includes:

- **The ideal conditions needed to create and scale digital development,** such as the support needed internally from management for a digital project and which digital products and services are appropriate for use in their context.
- **Digital terminology and best practice in using digital.** The digital project teams within the not-for-profits learn how to use the agile working methodology that enables teams to work, learn and, if necessary, pivot fast as a team. The focus is on refusing to waste valuable time and resources moving in the wrong direction when the team could instead "fail fast" by testing as early as possible. Key aspects of agile working are the identification and rapid testing of assumptions, developing prototypes and the necessity of thinking from a user perspective (through user research). This encourages user-centred design, not design based on the untested assumptions of the designer.

Throughout the process of developing the digital product and service the not-for-profits start to be able to identify where digital techniques could be used to solve wider organisational challenges in future and, where relevant to the digital product or service, how they can monetise this.

- Not-for-profits, and the Tech for Good funders, also learn **how to judge the success of digital projects and when to shelve projects**, for example, when it emerges that projects are imposing a tech solution on a project where this is not appropriate (based on user research) and time and resources could be better spent elsewhere.

Mid-Term

As a result of working with a digital partner and receiving support from Tech for Good advisors and experts **the not-for-profits are able to deliver a viable and sustainable digital product**. They then apply this knowledge to **develop more effective, sustainable and scalable digital products** and services in future beyond the Tech for Good programme.

The not-for-profits **also become comfortable with and embed digital ways of working across their organisation**, for example, working in a leaner and more agile way across their work, identifying and testing assumptions as early as possible, and ensuring all services are based on research about the beneficiaries and the support they need.

Long-Term

The delivery of a successful and sustainable digital product or service and/or the adoption of digital ways of working in relation to non-digital services leads to **more effective services, improved access to their services, and improve outcomes for their intended beneficiaries.**

OUTCOMES: WIDER NOT-FOR-PROFIT AND TECH ECOSYSTEM

Those actively involved or interested in the wider tech for good ecosystem (including investors, funders, digital agencies, evaluators, not-for-profit organisations):

- See evidence of a profound shift in service delivery bought about by the digital transformation and **embrace their role supporting or developing new digital projects** to start-up and scale.
- **Increase their understanding of good practice in how to identify, set up and run good digital projects.** For example, this could include an understanding of what kind of funding is needed to support a successful digital project (e.g. that allows for experimentation and iterative development) and how to judge the success of a digital team or product.
- **Create or participate in networks and collaborations which support digital project development**, for example, through the implementation of joint projects or generating/sharing learning and knowledge about tech for good.
- **Support funding structures allow for innovation** and iterative development processes using build, test, learn methodologies.

ASSUMPTIONS

Assumptions are the core beliefs that underpin the theory of change and explain the ´theory´ behind how and why certain activities are expected to bring about certain changes in a given context or why certain conditions/ factors (either internal or external) need to be in place for change to happen. We have identified nine assumptions for the Tech for Good programme:

I) Digital projects have sufficient support from management within not-for-profits, for example, leadership within the not-for-profit understands the potential of the digital project and provide support.
II) Effective partnerships will form between not-for-profits and their digital partners, for example, both the not-for-profit and their digital partner develop an understanding of the resources and commitment required to ensure the project is successful.
III) Creating a product and 'learning by doing' is key to creating more relevant and useful digital products.
IV) Projects will be problem focused, applying digital in situations where it is appropriate.
V) The team developing a product is as important as the project concept/idea.
VI) Some projects have the potential to become sustainable after funding is provided.
VII) The learning for an organisation embracing digital ways of working is as useful as the actual creation of the product.
VIII) A lot of value from the programme won't become clear until further into a project's lifecycle.
IX) Successful digital demonstration projects (and associated advocacy/ communications) are an effective tool to influence the wider tech for good ecosystem.