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Becta leading
next generation
learning

Harnessing Technology funding 2009–10: Guidance for local authorities



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Top level summary

The Harnessing Technology Grant is capital funding and 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.

Becta has identified the following investment priorities which local authorities and schools should consider when determining local investment:

- broadband services appropriate to need, with sustainable plans for further development of local and regional networks to ensure the necessary capacity and services are available.
- learning platforms, email services and personal storage areas for learners and staff. Services need to conform to Becta's functional and technical specifications and be available for all users inside and outside educational institutions, including users' homes, and must be available outside core school hours.
- simplified sign-on for users: Shibboleth – an authentication and authorisation infrastructure capable of granting individual learners with secure anywhere/anytime access to educational resources – must be implemented in conjunction with the UK Access Management Federation, with the local authority or Regional Broadband Consortium acting as identity and service provider.
- Parental reporting: Online access to reporting systems and information. Schools should provide timely, meaningful and manageable information to parents through appropriate and secure use of management information systems, learning platforms, managed learning environments, messaging services and other suitable online reporting systems.
- integration of learning and management systems at institution, local authority and, where appropriate, regional level so that data is available securely when and where it is required.
- High-quality digital learning resources in line with Becta's quality principles, taking advantage of national and local aggregation opportunities.

Allocations by local authority can be found on the TeacherNet website:



www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/resourcesfinanceandbuilding/capitalinvestment/allocations/statement



www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/resourcesfinanceandbuilding/capitalinvestment/guidanceindex/harnessingtechnology



1. Introduction

To ensure that investment in technology delivers benefits for children, young people and adult learners, the Government¹ has asked Becta to lead the national Harnessing Technology strategy². The aim is to bring about a step change in the way technology is used across education and skills.

Harnessing Technology is supported by the Harnessing Technology Grant – Standards Fund investment for schools totalling £639.5 million over three years, 2008 to 2011. This capital grant represents one source of funding for technology. Other sources of technology funding, particularly for recurring costs, are outlined below.

Where technology is used well, evidence demonstrates that significant benefits for learners can be achieved³. The Harnessing Technology Grant represents an important investment grant to support developments that will benefit all learners.

However, delivering better outcomes by using technology to improve services requires determined and co-ordinated approaches at school, local and national levels, and local authorities have an important role to play. On 3 March 2009 Becta published its *Harnessing Technology* implementation plan⁴ for children, schools and families. This outlines specific goals and priorities for the sector and identifies actions that national and intermediary partners will together work to deliver in order to support change.

¹ Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS).

² *Harnessing Technology: Next Generation Learning 2008-14: A summary* www.becta.org.uk/publication/harnessing-technologystrategy

³ *Harnessing Technology Review 2007: Progress and impact of technology in education.* www.becta.org.uk/research/reports/htreview07

⁴ *Harnessing Technology for Next Generation Learning: Children, Schools and Families Implementation Plan 2009–2012.* www.becta.org.uk/publications/childrenschoolsandfamilies



2. Harnessing Technology priorities

The goals for Harnessing Technology in this sector are:

- greater flexibility in and choice of learning options – using technology to offer differentiated curricula and learning experiences that help meet children’s and young people’s needs and preferences
- tailored and responsive assessment – both formative (for example, more immediate feedback on learning, better information about progress) and summative (for example, flexible end-of-stage assessment)
- engaging learning experiences – for learners of all abilities, in all contexts, including children and young people who are hard to reach
- strengthened relationships between families, schools and learners – with an emphasis on the adoption of information systems and use of online tools to improve parental involvement.

This can only happen if we create a ‘technology-confident’ system:

- empowering learners and supporting their engagement in learning with technology
- building good technology leadership, innovation and knowledge transfer
- ensuring all schools and providers are mature in their use of technology to support learning
- building an integrated, accessible technology infrastructure
- developing improved, personalised learning and teaching with technology.

In particular, there are five key priorities on which Becta and its partners will focus particular attention:

- a **learner entitlement** for children and young people – an expectation that everyone, no matter what their circumstances, should have access to high-quality tools, resources and support for their learning in educational establishments and at home
- **tools and support for professionals:** easy access to high-quality learning and lesson resources, more effective ways of generating and delivering excellent learning experiences, and improved tools for planning and learner management
- improved services, content and support for **family and informal learning** – for those who go online or use technology at home either to support children and young people or to learn and find out things themselves
- greater **value for money and sustainability** – through the integration of personal devices and tools that young people and adult learners use in their daily lives, and greater environmental sustainability
- nationally recognised, innovative **technology leadership networks**, building on and enhancing existing ones and focusing on developing shared understanding of how common issues and challenges are addressed.

3. The role of local authorities

Local authorities have a critical role to play in relation to technology investment for schools. They are responsible for distributing the Harnessing Technology Grant to eligible institutions and can help guide and shape this and other investment in technology to ensure that key priorities are addressed and value for money is achieved.

Local authorities also have an important role to play in next-generation learning – leading and guiding technology-supported change and working with Becta, other partners and schools to ensure that the right systems and approaches are in place to improve and transform services.



4. Key investment priorities

Becta has identified the following priorities that local authorities and schools should consider when determining local investment:

- **Broadband services** appropriate to need, with sustainable plans for further development of local and regional networks to ensure that the necessary capacity and services are available.
- **Learning platforms, email services and personal storage areas** for learners and staff. Services need to conform to Becta's functional and technical specifications and be available for all users inside and outside educational institutions, including users' homes, and must be available outside core school hours.
- **Simplified sign-on for users:** Shibboleth [<http://shibboleth.internet2.edu/>] – an authentication and authorisation infrastructure capable of granting individual learners with secure anywhere/anytime access to educational resources – must be implemented in conjunction with the UK Access Management Federation, with the local authority or Regional Broadband Consortium acting as identity and service provider.
- **Parental reporting:** online access to reporting systems and information. Schools should provide timely, meaningful and manageable information to parents through appropriate and secure use of management information systems, learning platforms, managed learning environments, messaging services and other suitable online reporting systems.
- **Integration of learning and management systems** at institution, local authority and, where appropriate, regional level so that data is available securely when and where it is required.
- **High-quality digital learning resources** in line with Becta's quality principles, taking advantage of national and local aggregation opportunities

5. Sources of funding for technology

The Harnessing Technology Grant is just one source of funding for technology. Maintaining and developing technology involves both capital costs (for example for investment in new hardware, software and systems) and revenue costs (for example, for technical support and other ongoing services).

The Harnessing Technology Grant can be used for capital spending on technology-related priorities. Schools and local authorities are advised to make use of other funding such as the School Development Grant to cover recurring costs, and other capital funding sources on technology – for instance, the Devolved Formula Capital – for further capital investment.

Some local authorities will have been notified of an addition to their 2008–09 Harnessing Technology Grant funding under the heading 'Other ICT'. This form of supported borrowing is available to authorities currently in receipt of Computers for Pupils (CfP) funding. It has been made available to help them 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.

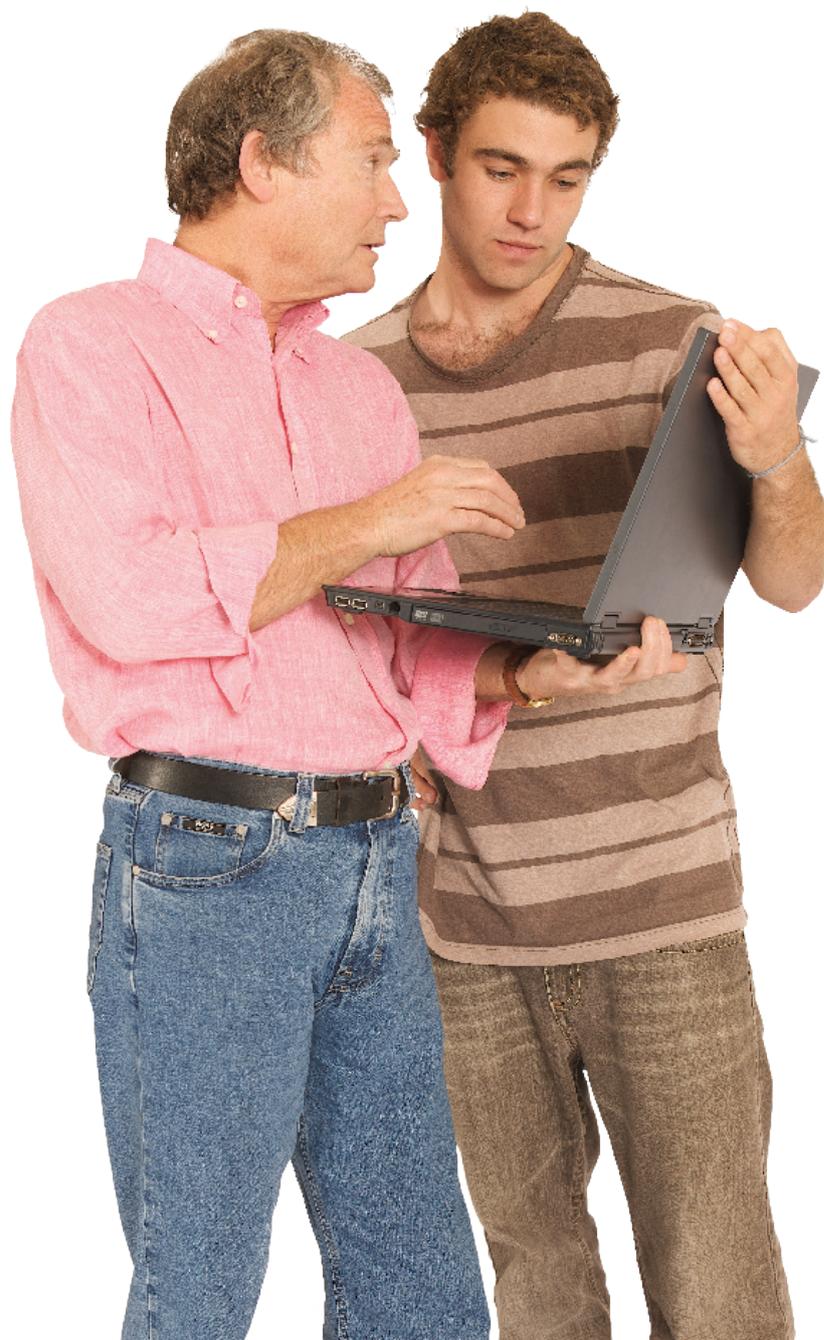
The Building Schools for the Future programme, Primary Capital Programme and Home Access are also key sources of funding for technology investment.

Allocation and use of the Harnessing Technology Grant should be considered in the context of how these other sources of funding are drawn on and used.

6. Home Access

In September 2008, the Government announced an investment of £300 million to provide funding directly to parents for home internet access for disadvantaged learners in England. Becta is piloting the programme in Oldham and Suffolk in 2008–09, and its wider roll-out will begin in 2009–10.

While Home Access is a separate technology-related funding programme that goes directly to parents, local authorities can use the Harnessing Technology Grant and other sources of funding to support its aims – for example, by investing in learning platforms that enable pupils with Home Access grants to access their schoolwork and digital learning resources from beyond the school.



7. Capital programmes

Technology is a key component of all major capital buildings programmes in the school sector. All these have the aim of transforming learning; they are not just about rebuilding and refurbishment.

Building Schools for the Future (BSF) provides a very high level of ICT (information and communication technology) capital funding – equivalent to £1,675 for every pupil place provided in the new and remodelled schools. This money is to pay for passive network infrastructure, active network equipment, hardware, software and setting up an area-wide managed service for ICT, usually as part of the Local Education Partnership (LEP). Schools then commit to providing revenue funding to maintain this managed service.

In academies and One School Pathfinders (OSPs), similar funding to that provided in BSF is incorporated into the funding agreement. Where academies are being built as part of the BSF programme, they are expected to join in the area-wide managed service. Where there is no BSF-managed service available, academies and OSPs are expected to use the Becta Infrastructure Services Framework to procure their ICT infrastructure, equipment and supporting services.

ICT is an integral part of the primary capital programme; however, unlike BSF, there is no specific budget for it. Local authorities are expected to ensure that a suitable proportion of their primary capital funding is allocated to technology to ensure that their primary schools are equipped for 21st-century learning.

Allocation and use of the Harnessing Technology Grant should be considered in the context of how capital programme and other sources of funding are drawn on and used.

8. City Learning Centres

Some local authorities receive both capital and revenue funding for their City Learning Centres (CLCs). Revenue funding for CLCs either sits within a local authority's Area Based Grant (ABG) or a school's School Development Grant (SDG), depending on how CLCs are managed locally. If the CLCs are managed centrally, the funding sits within the ABG; if managed by a partnership of schools, it sits within the SDG allocation of the schools in the partnership. In each case, the funding is not ring-fenced: the ABG can be spent on any local authority service; and the SDG can be spent on any purpose to raise the standards of teaching and learning in schools. Local authorities and schools should continue to have regard to any commitments they have entered.

Capital funding for CLCs is released once the Annual Performance Agreement has been approved by Becta. The funding is passed from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to a local authority via the usual channels. Individual local authorities will have their own, different processes for releasing the funding to the CLCs.



9. Harnessing Technology Grant allocation and distribution

Allocations by local authority can be found on the TeacherNet website:



www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/resourcesfinanceandbuilding/capitalinvestment/guidanceindex/harnessingtechnology

Allocations are made using a combination of factors: pupil numbers, deprivation and population sparsity. To manage potential losses to some local authorities due to changes in technology funding from 2008, the balance between pupil numbers, sparsity and deprivation will be phased in over the three years of the settlement: local authorities will see a reduction in funding of more than 10 per cent in 2008–09, 15 per cent in 2009–10 and 20 per cent in 2010–11.

The funding is distributed to local authorities through the DCSF Standards Fund.

Payments are made to local authorities quarterly, according to the following timetable:

2009 2010	2010 2011
May 2009	May 2010
September 2009	September 2010
December 2009	December 2010
March 2010	March 2011
April 2010	April 2011

Harnessing Technology Grant funding allocated in 2009–10 must be spent by 31 August 2010.

10. Eligibility of schools

The following types of schools are eligible for Harnessing Technology Grant funding:

- voluntary-aided and voluntary-controlled schools, community and foundation primary schools, middle schools and secondary and upper schools
- academies, city technology colleges, pupil referral units, maintained boarding and hospital schools
- maintained and non-maintained special schools
- maintained nursery schools.

Schools that receive other funding directly from the DCSF are eligible to receive the Harnessing Technology Grant from the local authority:

- **Academies** are eligible for Harnessing Technology Grant funding, but allocations should be determined on the basis of local priorities (rather than academies being automatically entitled to an allocation). It is likely that many academies will require some investment from this grant, as it is now standard practice for them to open in predecessor school buildings before they are rebuilt or refurbished.
- **City technology colleges (CTCs)** can also receive the grant, even though they are not usually within the scope of Standards Fund grants (and are paid Devolved Formula Capital under separate arrangements). The January 2007 pupil numbers used to calculate local authority allocations for the grant included CTCs, so they are potentially entitled to allocations, using the same criteria as other schools.
- **Non-maintained special schools** are also eligible, even though their other funding is paid directly to them by the DCSF.



11. Distributing the grant to schools

It is up to local authorities to determine the basis by which the Harnessing Technology Grant is allocated to individual schools. This arrangement is intended to give local authorities flexibility to use funding to target local priorities. At its most straightforward, distribution can occur on a per pupil basis. However, there may be benefits to adopting a more strategic approach in which a local authority targets schools facing particular challenges or circumstances to receive a greater proportion of funding.

Schools should be consulted over the allocation method (via the Schools Forum) and details of the approach being taken should be communicated to all eligible schools.

It is also recommended that individual schools' Harnessing Technology Grant allocations are made transparent to schools and that schools should be made aware of guidance on Harnessing Technology priorities.

The process of calculating how much Harnessing Technology Grant funding to allocate to individual local authorities took account of the proportion of pupils attending voluntary-aided schools in the authority. Appropriate weightings were then applied to account for the fact that these schools receive 90 per cent of the per pupil amount received by non-voluntary-aided schools (with governors being responsible for the remaining 10 per cent); and also to compensate voluntary-aided schools for their requirement to pay VAT. Therefore, if the local authority chooses to distribute the Harnessing Technology Grant to its schools on a per pupil basis, it would be consistent with the local authority allocation formula to pay a voluntary-aided school 90 per cent of what an equivalent sized non-voluntary-aided school would receive, but with an additional payment to cover the cost of VAT.

12. Retaining a proportion of the grant at local authority level

Local authorities are able to retain 25 per cent of their allocation centrally for centrally procured services or aggregated purchasing on behalf of all schools where improved value for money can be achieved. This includes investment in broadband infrastructure through regional broadband consortia or their approved suppliers.

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 greater value for money, such as might be the case with regional or local authority-wide learning platforms and other services. Local authorities should be transparent about how they are using the funding being retained centrally for the benefit of all schools.

13. Revenue implications of the Harnessing Technology Grant

Local authorities and schools investing in ICT infrastructure should be aware of any ongoing revenue costs for services provided through capital investment and plan the use of both their capital and revenue resources accordingly.

Local authorities have previously provided revenue funding to match spending on digital infrastructure (for example, to cover the costs of broadband connectivity). It is recommended that they contribute revenue funding in line with previous years or consult with their schools about the use of school revenue budgets for connectivity.



14. What the Harnessing Technology Grant can be used for

The Harnessing Technology Grant is capital funding and can be used to support purchases of ICT infrastructure and equipment or upgrades, as well as software and digital curriculum resources where these count as capital expenditure. For a precise definition of what is classified as capital, advice should be provided by local authority accountants who interpret accounting principles and guidance.

The grant can be used by to purchase computer software and digital learning resources provided that the resource being paid for (or the perpetual licence to use that resource) passes into the ownership of the school or local authority at the end of the service period; or that payment results in the school or local authority receiving a licence to use the resource for a specified time period longer than one year. This applies to both one-off purchases of software resources, and subscriptions to services that provide digital curriculum resources on an ongoing basis.



15. Can the Harnessing Technology Grant be spent on a learning platform?

Rather than being a single 'off the shelf' product, a learning platform is a collection of tools that provide a range of functions, including: content management; curriculum mapping and planning; learner interaction and administration; and other tools and services. The capital nature of the Harnessing Technology Grant means that it can be used to pay for some of the core elements involved in implementing and operating a learning platform:

- Technology hardware items (e.g. servers) count as capital assets and can be purchased using the grant.
- Software associated with learning platforms can also be covered by the grant provided that the software being paid for has a productive lifespan beyond the financial year in which it was paid for. This means that, following payment, the school or local authority either has outright ownership of the software product or a licence to use it, without any restrictions on the time period for which this applies; or has a licence to use the product for a specified time period that is longer than one year.

Some costs associated with running a learning platform may not qualify as capital expenditure – for instance, remote online hosting services provided by a third party. Schools and local authorities have other sources of revenue funding (such as the School Development Grant) available to them to cover such costs.



Annex: Further information and publications

For a range of information and support for schools, please visit:
www.becta.org.uk/schools

Strategy

Harnessing Technology: Next Generation Learning 2008–2014

www.becta.org.uk/publications/harnessingtechnologystrategy

Harnessing Technology for Next Generation Learning: Children, Schools and Families Implementation Plan 2009–2012

www.becta.org.uk/publications/childrenschoolsandfamilies

Next Generation Learning

Online information:

www.becta.org.uk/nextgenerationlearningcharter

Improving schools

- *What is the self-review framework? A guide for school leaders*
 - *How to use the self-review framework*
- www.becta.org.uk/improveyourschool

Planning sustainable success

- *Information management strategy framework: Guidance for schools*
 - *Planning technology into your building – a guide for school leaders*
- www.becta.org.uk/plansustainablesuccess

Achieving best value

- *Getting best value from your investment – a guide for school leaders*
- www.becta.org.uk/achievebestvalue

Home Access

Online information:

www.becta.org.uk/homeaccess

Safeguarding learners online

- *Safeguarding children online – a guide for school leaders*
 - *Safeguarding children in a digital world: Developing an LSCB e-safety strategy*
- www.becta.org.uk/safeguardlearnersonline

Inspiring parental engagement

- *Exploiting ICT to improve parental engagement, moving towards online reporting: Toolkit*
 - *Exploiting ICT to improve parental engagement, moving towards online reporting: Getting started with using ICT to support parental engagement*
- www.becta.org.uk/inspireparentalengagement

Making learning personal

- *Getting started with your learning platform: Advice for schools*
 - *Learning platforms in action (DVD)*
- www.becta.org.uk/makelearningpersonal

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