

# Digital Tomorrow Grant Guidelines

## A. Purpose

The purpose of the **o9 Digital Tomorrow Grant**, offered by o9, is to **support initiatives that focus on advancing digital literacy and promoting technological inclusion for underserved communities**. The grant aims to address the pressing issue of the digital divide, wherein certain groups and regions lack access to technology, digital resources, and the skills necessary to participate fully in the digital age. By providing funding, o9 seeks to make a significant impact in bridging this gap and empowering underserved communities to thrive in our modern, technology-driven world.

## B. The amount to be awarded

For the **o9 Digital Tomorrow Grant** offered by o9, **the amount of money that will be awarded to a successful applicant is \$250,000**. Applicants can request this amount to support projects and initiatives aimed at advancing digital literacy and technological inclusion in underserved communities.

Applicants are required to provide a detailed budget in their proposals, outlining how the grant amount will be utilized to achieve the project's goals. The objective is to ensure that the funds are distributed to an initiative that has the potential to make a substantial and sustainable difference in promoting digital access and skills development within underserved communities.

## C. Timelines

### The deadline for applying

**The deadline for submitting grant applications will be midnight (CET) on the 31st October, 2023.** Interested organizations and entities will have until this date to submit their proposals to o9 for consideration.

Applications received after the deadline will not be considered, as the review process requires adequate time for a thorough evaluation of each proposal and the selection of successful recipients.

Applicants are encouraged to plan and prepare their proposals in advance to ensure they meet the deadline and have sufficient time to address all of o9's requirements and guidelines.

### Application review and final selection Timeline

#### → Phase 1

All submitted application will be reviewed by a panel composed by representatives from o9. This phase will end on the 25th of November 2023 and the result will be a selection of 3 final candidates.

#### → Phase 2

An o9 Digital Tomorrow steering committee composed by representatives from o9, industry experts, and external partners will review and select the final selected project by the 1st of December 2023. The announcement of the winner will be communitaed no later than the 8th of December 2023.

### The timing of the payment

The disbursement of the grant funds will follow a structured timeline to support the successful implementation of awarded projects. The payment schedule is designed to provide flexibility while ensuring that the project is progressing as expected and accountability.

- **Initial Payment (50%):** Upon announcement of the successful project(s) during the first week of December 2023, an initial payment equivalent to 50% of the total grant amount will be disbursed to the successful grant recipient(s). This payment is intended to provide immediate support for project initiation and early-stage activities.
- **Milestone-Based Payments:** To further facilitate project advancement and ensure the achievement of key project milestones, two additional payments of 25% each will be released upon the successful completion of predefined milestones:
  - **The second payment installment of 25% will be paid upon the agreed milestone between each grantee and o9.** Grant recipients are responsible for determining the milestones that best reflect the progression of their projects. This milestone could encompass various project phases, deliverables, or community impact targets. Upon reaching the milestone, recipients will be required to submit a progress report outlining the accomplished tasks and outcomes. Once the progress report is reviewed and approved by o9, the subsequent payment will be released.
  - **The final payment installment of 25% will be paid upon successful completion of the final milestone** defined during the application process and agreed between the grantee and o9.

This tiered payment approach aims to promote a sustainable and dynamic project implementation process, allowing recipients to allocate resources effectively and measure their project's progress in alignment with their unique objectives. It is the sole responsibility of grant recipients to manage their projects and finances in a manner that aligns with the established payment schedule. Please note that any deviations from the payment schedule, adjustments to milestones, or delays in project implementation may require prior written approval from o9.

Additionally, it is important to note that o9 reserves the right to withhold the release of all or part of the total grant funds in the event that the agreed-upon milestones are not successfully met or if there is a failure to meet the commitments made during the application phase. This decision will be made with careful consideration and a commitment to maintaining the integrity of the grant program and upholding the values of accountability, transparency, and responsible project implementation.

### Project implementation deadline

The awarded project(s) must be **fully implemented and completed by the end of 2024**. o9 requires grant recipients to ensure the timely execution of their projects to achieve the desired outcomes. Meeting this implementation deadline is essential for effective monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of project progress. Grant recipients are encouraged to plan their activities, timelines, and resource allocation accordingly to ensure successful project completion within the specified timeframe. Extensions beyond the deadline will only be considered under exceptional circumstances, subject to approval by o9, and must be requested well in advance with valid justifications.

## D. Objectives

**o9 Digital Tomorrow** grant applicants should meet at least one of the following objectives:

1. **Improving Digital Literacy:** The grant aims to support projects that offer comprehensive digital literacy training and education programs. These initiatives should target individuals in underserved communities, providing them with the skills and knowledge required to use digital tools effectively, navigate the internet safely, and access essential online services.
2. **Enhancing Access to Technology:** Recognizing the importance of hardware and internet access in today's society, the grant aims to fund projects that focus on providing affordable or free access to technology devices, such as computers, tablets, or smartphones, to those who lack the resources to acquire or access them.
3. **Empowering Marginalized Groups:** Projects that specifically empower marginalized groups, such as women, minorities, persons with disabilities, and elderly individuals, are encouraged. The grant aims to create opportunities that promote diversity and inclusion within the tech industry and digital spaces.
4. **Promoting Digital Citizenship:** Initiatives that emphasize responsible and ethical online behavior, including cyber-safety, data privacy, and digital etiquette, will receive consideration for funding. Encouraging good digital citizenship is crucial for creating a positive and secure online environment.
5. **Fostering Technological Innovation:** The grant seeks to support projects that use technology as an enabler to address local challenges and create innovative solutions for societal issues within underserved communities. By fostering local innovation, the grant aims to stimulate economic growth and enhance community well-being.
6. **Strengthening Community Engagement:** Projects that foster a sense of community and collaboration among beneficiaries will be prioritized. The grant's purpose is not just to provide a one-time intervention but to establish sustainable programs that build lasting relationships and networks within underserved communities.
7. **Measuring and Scaling Impact:** Projects that incorporate clear methods for monitoring and evaluating the impact of their initiatives to ensure effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

Through the **o9 Digital Tomorrow** grant, o9 envisions creating a more inclusive and equitable technological landscape where everyone has the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the digital world. By investing in these initiatives, the company aims to strengthen communities, uplift individuals, and contribute to a more prosperous and interconnected society.

## E. Preference for Projects Located in India

While we welcome project proposals from all regions and countries, **o9 expresses a preference for projects that are located and serve underserved communities within India.** However, o9 remains committed to considering proposals from other countries that demonstrate strong potential for making a positive impact on advancing digital literacy and technological inclusion in underserved communities.

As a technology company with 61% of our employees located in India, o9 recognizes the unique challenges faced by underserved communities within India. By providing a preference for projects located within India, we aim to strengthen our support for initiatives that address the specific needs and opportunities in India's diverse and vibrant communities.

## F. Requirements

To align with the mission and objectives of the **o9 Digital Tomorrow** grant, all applicants are required to meet the following requirements:

- **Demonstrated Relevance:** Projects need to demonstrate their relevance and significance to their target communities clearly. The proposal should outline how the project aligns with its local context and provide details as to how it will address the specific challenges faced by its target community.
- **Community Engagement:** Projects must actively involve members of their target communities in the planning, design, and implementation stages. The engagement of beneficiaries and local stakeholders will enhance the project's sustainability and effectiveness.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Proposals need to reflect a deep understanding of the cultural diversity and sensitivities of the target communities. Respect for local customs, traditions, and values should be integrated into project activities.
- **Local Partnerships:** Projects must consider establishing partnerships with local organizations, non-profits, or community-based groups that have a track record of working effectively with underserved communities in the region.
- **Scalability and Replicability:** While the project's primary focus may be on a specific state or community, consideration should be given to its potential for scalability and replicability in other regions, allowing for broader impact.
- **Indian nonprofits:** Nonprofits located in India must comply with the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), 2010, and have a valid FCRA certificate to receive the grant.

### o9 Employee Engagement Initiative

As part of the grant program, **applicants are required to include an o9 employee engagement initiative** in their proposed projects. The employee engagement initiative should aim to actively involve o9 employees in the implementation of the project.

#### → Rationale:

The inclusion of an employee engagement initiative is designed to foster a sense of ownership, commitment, and participation within o9. Engaging employees in the project will not only enhance their understanding of the initiative but also encourage them to contribute their skills, expertise, and time to make a meaningful impact on the target community.

#### → Guidelines for the o9 Employee Engagement Initiative:

- **Description:** Provide a clear description of the proposed employee engagement initiative. Explain how o9 employees will be encouraged to actively participate in the project and jointly contribute to its success.
- **Roles and Responsibilities:** Clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of o9 employees within the project. Specify the areas where their expertise and skills will be utilized.
- **Volunteer Opportunities (virtual or in-person):** Identify specific volunteer opportunities for o9 employees. These opportunities can include mentoring individuals in digital literacy, participating in workshops or training sessions, or contributing to content creation. Volunteer opportunities can be virtual or in-person.
- **Time Commitment:** Define the expected time commitment for o9 employees participating in the engagement initiative. Ensure that the time commitment required aligns with their regular work responsibilities and minimizes potential disruptions.

- **Recognition and Incentives:** Describe any recognition or non-monetary incentives that will be provided to o9 employees who actively participate in the engagement initiative. Recognition of employee contributions will help foster positivity and motivation.
- **Employee Feedback:** Include mechanisms to gather feedback from o9 employees regarding their experiences with the engagement initiative. This feedback can be valuable for continuous improvement and refining future engagement strategies.
- **Integration with Project Goals:** Illustrate how the o9 employee engagement initiative complements and enhances the overall project goals and objectives. Emphasize how the active involvement of o9 employees will contribute to the project's success and sustainability.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Include a plan for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the employee engagement initiative. Describe the methods for assessing employee participation, satisfaction, and the initiative's impact on the project's outcomes.

## G. Eligibility

### Types of Eligible Applicants

1. **Non-profit Organizations:** Registered non-profit organizations with a focus on community development, education, digital literacy, or technology inclusion are eligible to apply for the grant. These organizations should have a track record of successfully implementing similar initiatives and a clear commitment to advancing the goals of the grant.
2. **Community-Based Organizations:** Local community-based organizations working directly with underserved communities and promoting digital literacy and technological inclusion are encouraged to apply. These organizations should have a deep understanding of the needs and challenges faced by target communities.
3. **Educational Institutions:** Schools, colleges, universities, and vocational training centers that are committed to bridging the digital divide and empowering underserved students with digital skills can apply for the grant.

### Eligible ways to spend the award

The grant money awarded by o9 can be utilized for a variety of purposes that align with the grant's purpose and objectives of advancing digital literacy and technological inclusion in underserved communities.

Part of the grant can be allocated to monitoring and evaluating the impact of the initiatives, ensuring effective use of the funds, and identifying areas for improvement. Also, a portion of the grant money can be used to cover necessary administrative expenses and overhead costs directly related to the implementation of the funded projects.

At o9, we deeply value the potential impact of every project seeking our grant support. **We recognize that administrative expenses and overhead costs are crucial components of a successful project implementation.** With the aim of empowering our grant recipients, we have decided not to require a specific percentage for these costs. We believe that each project is unique, and the applicants are best positioned to determine the appropriate amount required to efficiently manage their initiatives. By affording this flexibility, we hope to provide all applicants with the freedom to design and execute their projects according to their specific needs and circumstances. Our intention is to foster an inclusive environment that supports diverse approaches and solutions, ultimately enabling each project to achieve its fullest potential for positive change.

It's essential for grant recipients to use the funds responsibly and transparently, adhering to the proposed budget and providing periodic progress reports to o9. The goal is to ensure that the grant money is utilized effectively to create a lasting positive impact on digital literacy and technological inclusion within underserved communities.

### Non-qualifying Activities

- **Political or Religious Activities:** Grants cannot be used to fund any political campaigns, religious activities, or projects that promote a specific religious belief.
- **For-profit Ventures:** Initiatives that are primarily profit-driven or commercial ventures are not eligible for the o9 Digital Tomorrow grant.
- **Individual Scholarships:** Funding for individual scholarships, tuition fees, or personal educational expenses is not within the scope of the o9 Digital Tomorrow grant.
- **Activities Outside Targeted Communities:** The grant should be used exclusively for projects that directly benefit underserved communities and not for initiatives outside the specified beneficiaries.
- **Purchase of Non-Technology Related Items:** The grant cannot be used to purchase non-technology related items or equipment and may only be used for items or equipment directly related to digital literacy or digital inclusion.
- **Activities Contrary to Local Laws and Regulations:** Any activities that contravene local laws and regulations or promote illegal practices are not eligible for funding.
- **Retroactive Expenses:** Costs incurred by applicants before the grant approval date and/or retrospective funding requests will not be considered.

### Types of Ineligible Applicants

1. **For-profit Companies:** For-profit entities, including businesses and corporations, are generally not eligible to apply for the o9 Digital Tomorrow grant. The grant's focus is on supporting initiatives with a social impact and community benefit rather than commercial interests.
2. **Individuals:** Grants are typically not awarded to individuals seeking funding for personal projects, education, or other individual needs.
3. **Political or Religious Organizations:** Political parties, advocacy groups with political agendas, and religious organizations focused primarily on religious activities or proselytization are not eligible to apply for the o9 Digital Tomorrow grant.
4. **Entities with Conflicts of Interest\*:** Applicants with conflicts of interest may be considered ineligible.

### \* Conflict of Interest Policy

The conflict of interest policy for the o9 Digital Tomorrow grant offered by o9 is designed to ensure fair and transparent decision-making processes and maintain the integrity of the grant application and review process. This policy aims to identify, address, and manage any conflicts of interest that may arise among individuals involved in the evaluation and selection of grant recipients.

**Definition of Conflict of Interest:** A conflict of interest occurs when an individual's personal, financial, or professional interests or relationships could potentially influence or bias their judgment or decision-making in matters related to the grant application process.

**Disclosure of Potential Conflicts:** All individuals involved in the grant application and review process, including o9 employees, external experts, or any other stakeholders, are required to disclose any potential conflicts of interest that may arise. This disclosure must be made before engaging in any activities related to the grant evaluation.

**Identification and Assessment:** The Social Impact team responsible for overseeing the grant process will review any disclosed conflicts of interest to determine their potential impact on impartial decision-making. The evaluation will consider the nature of the conflict, the individual's role in the review process, and the level of influence the conflict may have on grant selection.

**Recusal and Non-Participation:** Individuals with identified conflicts of interest shall be recused from any grant evaluation discussions or decision-making processes where their objectivity may be compromised. They will be excluded from participating in the evaluation and selection of grant recipients related to the specific conflict.

**Decision-Making Transparency:** All decisions related to conflict of interest assessments and recusal shall be documented and maintained with the highest level of confidentiality. Transparency will be maintained throughout the evaluation process, and any decisions made in response to conflicts of interest will be communicated to relevant parties.

**Confidentiality and Data Protection:** Information related to conflicts of interest disclosed by individuals will be handled with strict confidentiality and in compliance with relevant data protection laws and regulations.

**Enforcement:** Failure to comply with the conflict of interest policy may result in consequences, including disqualification from participation in the grant evaluation process or other appropriate disciplinary actions.

By adhering to this conflict of interest policy, o9 seeks to uphold the highest standards of integrity and transparency in the evaluation and selection of grant recipients, ensuring that the awarded grants are allocated to initiatives that genuinely benefit underserved communities and advance digital literacy and technological inclusion.

#### Examples of stakeholders who might have a conflict of interest for the grant application include:

- **Employees of o9:** o9 employees who are involved in the grant application review process may have a conflict of interest if they have personal or professional relationships with applicants or organizations applying for the grant.
- **Relatives of o9 Employees:** Relatives or close associates of o9 employees who are associated with organizations applying for the grant may have a conflict of interest.
- **Board Members:** Board members of o9 that are associated with organizations applying for the grant may face a conflict of interest.
- **Vendors or Partners of o9:** Companies or individuals providing services to o9 may have a conflict of interest if they also apply for grant funding.
- **Organizations with Business Ties:** Organizations that have significant business relationships with o9, such as partnerships or contracts, may face conflicts of interest if they seek grant funding.
- **Organizations Linked to o9 Investors or Shareholders:** Entities in which o9 investors or shareholders hold significant interests may have conflicts of interest if they apply for the grant.
- **Former o9 Employees:** Former employees of o9 who now work for organizations applying for the grant may face conflicts of interest.



- **Organizations with Shared Board Members:** Organizations with shared board members with o9 may have conflicts of interest if they apply for the grant.
- **Organizations with Shared Directors or Founders:** Entities that have shared directors or founders with o9 may face conflicts of interest if they seek grant funding.

## H. Joint Applications

o9 welcomes joint applications from different organizations that wish to collaborate and partner on a project focused on advancing digital literacy and technological inclusion in underserved communities. We believe that collaborative efforts among organizations can lead to enhanced impact, innovative solutions, and greater sustainability.

### Requirements for Joint Applications

- **Lead Applicant:** Joint applications should designate one organization as the lead applicant responsible for coordinating the project and acting as the primary point of contact with o9. The lead applicant will be responsible for submitting the joint application on behalf of all participating organizations.
- **Eligibility of Partners:** Each organization participating in the joint application must individually meet the eligibility criteria as outlined in the grant guidelines. All participating organizations should be registered and legally recognized entities within their respective countries.
- **Clear Roles and Responsibilities:** The joint application should clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of each partner organization. Each organization's unique expertise and contributions to the project should be articulated to demonstrate a cohesive and complementary collaboration.
- **Mutual Agreement:** The joint application must include a signed memorandum of understanding (MOU) or partnership agreement among all participating organizations. This agreement should detail the terms of collaboration, resource sharing, decision-making processes, and the allocation of responsibilities for project implementation.

## I. Application Process

### Review Process and Criteria

The application review process for the **o9 Digital Tomorrow** grant offered by o9 will be conducted in a fair, transparent, and thorough manner. The process will involve multiple stages to evaluate each application based on its alignment with the grant's purpose, feasibility, potential impact, and overall quality. The key steps in the review process are as follows:

1. **Application Submission:** Interested organizations and entities will be invited to submit their grant proposals by 31st October 2023. The application forms and guidelines will be provided by o9, outlining the required information and documentation.
2. **Initial Screening:** The submitted applications will undergo an initial screening to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria and include all required. Incomplete or ineligible applications may be disqualified at this stage.

3. **Expert Review:** Eligible applications will then progress to a comprehensive review by a panel of experts, which may consist of representatives from o9, industry experts, and external partners. Each application will be assessed based on the review criteria shared with all applicants.
4. **Review Criteria:** The review criteria will be used to evaluate and score each application. The criteria may include but are not limited to:
  - a. **Alignment with Grant Objectives:** How well the proposed project aligns with the grant's purpose and objectives, focusing on digital literacy and technological inclusion for underserved communities.
  - b. **Feasibility and Sustainability:** The feasibility of the project, including its budget, timeline, and scalability potential. Projects with clear plans for long-term sustainability will be prioritized.
  - c. **Potential Impact:** The potential impact of the proposed project on the target communities and how it addresses specific challenges related to digital literacy and inclusion.
  - d. **Innovation and Creativity:** The level of innovation and creativity demonstrated in the project proposal.
  - e. **Organizational Capacity:** The track record and capacity of the applicant organization to effectively implement the proposed project.
  - f. **Inclusivity:** The extent to which the project promotes diversity and inclusivity within its activities and for the benefit of target beneficiaries.
  - g. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The clarity and effectiveness of the proposed project's monitoring and evaluation plan to measure its impact and success.
  - h. **Location:** As mentioned in the section E of this document, there will be a preference for projects located in India.
5. **Final Selection:** Based on expert review and scoring, the final selection of grant recipients will be made by o9. The selected applicants will be notified of their award and provided with further instructions for the disbursement of funds.
6. **Post-Award Reporting:** Grant recipients will be required to submit periodic progress reports and financial updates to o9 during the project's implementation. These reports will help track the project's achievements and ensure transparency and accountability in the use of grant funds.

By following this thorough application review process, o9 aims to select and support projects that have the potential to make a meaningful difference in advancing digital literacy and technological inclusion for underserved communities.

### Joint Application process

- **Submission of Joint Application:** The lead applicant shall submit the joint application on behalf of all participating organizations. The application should adhere to the standard application guidelines, including the required proposal format, budget breakdown, and supporting documents.
- **Mutual Agreement (MOU):** Along with the joint application, the lead applicant must submit an MOU or letter of intent signed by all participating organizations, expressing their commitment to the collaboration and the project's objectives.
- **Evaluation and Selection:** o9 will evaluate joint applications based on the merit, feasibility, and potential impact of the collaborative project. Successful joint applications will be selected based on the same criteria as individual applications.

- **Grant Agreement:** Upon selection, the lead applicant will enter into a grant agreement with o9 on behalf of all participating organizations. The agreement will detail the terms and conditions of the grant, including the approved grant amount, reporting requirements, and project timelines.

**Note:** Joint applications should demonstrate a strong and well-coordinated partnership that enhances the project's outcomes and effectiveness. o9 encourages organizations to leverage their collective strengths and resources to create transformative change in underserved communities.

## J. Ready, steady, apply!

Before starting the application process, please make sure you have read and understood this entire document.

1. **Access the Application Form:** Access the official [o9 Digital Tomorrow Grant website](#) to access the application form. This form will contain specific fields and sections to capture essential information about your organization and the proposed project.
2. **Provide Contact Information:** Begin by filling out the contact information section, including the name of your organization, address, email, phone number, and the primary point of contact for the application. All personal data will be processed in accordance with [o9's privacy policy](#).
3. **Project Summary:** Provide a concise summary of your proposed project. This section should highlight the key objectives, target community, expected outcomes, and the amount of funding requested.
4. **Project Description:** Present a detailed description of your project, outlining the activities, timeline, and budget. Explain how your project will advance digital literacy and technological inclusion in underserved communities.
5. **Alignment with Grant Objectives:** Clearly demonstrate how your project aligns with the grant's purpose and objectives. Highlight the relevance of your initiative to the grant's focus areas.
6. **Feasibility and Sustainability:** Explain the feasibility of your project, including the resources and expertise available to implement it successfully. Outline your plans for long-term sustainability beyond the grant period.
7. **Potential Impact:** Describe the potential impact of your project on the target communities. Use data and evidence to support your claims about the positive outcomes your initiative can achieve.
8. **Budget and Financial Plan:** Provide a comprehensive budget for your project detailing how you intend to use the grant funds. Clearly outline the expenses related to personnel, materials, equipment, and any other relevant costs.
9. **Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** Include a comprehensive proposal for monitoring and evaluation. This proposal should outline the methodology and strategies for reporting periodic project implementation progress and financial updates. At o9, we recognize that each project is unique, with its own set of needs, rhythms, and resources. With this understanding, we have chosen to leave the monitoring and evaluation proposal open for each project to submit according to its specific requirements. We aim to empower our grant recipients to design monitoring and evaluation frameworks that align closely with the nature and scale of their projects. We believe that tailoring these mechanisms to suit the project's specific context will enhance the accuracy and relevance of the data collected, ultimately contributing to more meaningful and insightful reporting.

- 10. Attach Supporting Documents:** Include any necessary supporting documents, such as organizational certificates, financial statements, or letters of support from partners or stakeholders.
- 11. Review and Edit:** Review your completed application form for accuracy and completeness. Ensure that all required fields are filled out and there are no typographical errors or missing information.
- 12. Submit the Application:** Submit the completed application form and all supporting documents via the o9 Digital Tomorrow website by 31st October 2023.
- 13. Confirmation and Follow-Up:** After submitting your application, you may receive a confirmation of receipt from o9. If there are any follow-up inquiries or requests for additional information, o9 expects prompt responses from applicants.
- 14. Await Results:** Once the application review process is complete, o9 will notify successful applicants by 8th December 2023. If your proposal is selected, you will receive further instructions regarding the disbursement of the grant funds.

By following these instructions, you can effectively fill out and submit the grant application form for consideration. Remember to provide clear and compelling information about your project's potential impact and how it aligns with the grant's objectives to enhance your chances of receiving the grant from o9.

## K. Any questions?

If you have any questions or need clarification regarding the grant application process, you can reach out to o9 for assistance at the following email address: [o9grant@o9solutions.com](mailto:o9grant@o9solutions.com)

Elevate ideas, inspire Action – Apply for the **o9 Digital Tomorrow** Grant!