









# Good Things Foundation



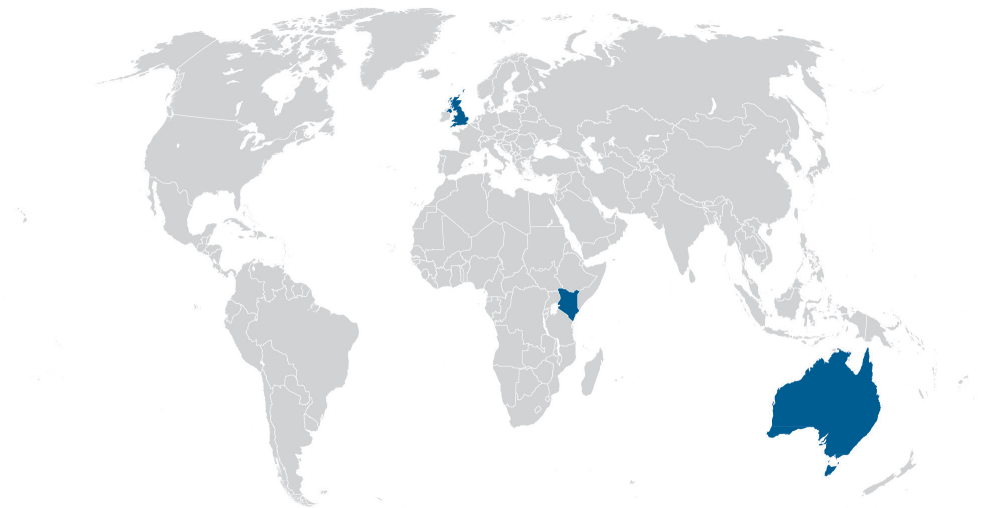
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 <p><b>Program Type</b> Large-scale digital literacy</p>	 <p><b>Medium of Delivery</b> Blended-learning approach</p>	 <p><b>Program Duration</b> Variable</p>	 <p><b>Annual Participants</b> ~230,000</p>
 <p><b>Organization Type</b> Private not-for-profit</p>	 <p><b>Year Established</b> 2014</p>	 <p><b>Average Fees per Participant</b> Free</p>	 <p><b>Number of Alumni</b> ~1,000,000</p>



**Geographic Coverage**

Present in the United Kingdom, Australia and Kenya.



## COMPANY OVERVIEW

**The Good Things Foundation seeks to improve the lives of individuals through programs that tackle digital, financial, and social exclusion. Good Things' Future Digital Inclusion initiative, covered in this case study, is a free program that teaches basic digital skills to digitally-excluded people. It leverages the Online Centres Network, a platform of more than 5,000 grassroots organizations, to source and support those who have been excluded from the sphere of technology. Good Things Foundation operates in the United Kingdom, Australia, and Kenya and has coached over 2 million students through its basic digital skills training program.**

For more information, visit:

<https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/>

### Mission statement

Using digital technology to support equal opportunity, with the aim of empowering individuals to participate fully in today's society.

“We develop Learn My Way quite regularly. The context is always changing and we're always thinking about user experience. We try to make it a useful tool with relevant content to as much of our network as possible.”

– Emily Redmond, Service Designer,  
Good Things Foundation

## Key Innovations

Good Things Foundation has two unique characteristics that have helped it to achieve impact:

1. **Delivery Model (Online Centres):** The program is delivered through a diverse set of more than 5,000 local online learning locations that include libraries, small community centers, social housing associations, and businesses
2. **Personalized, Informal and Flexible Approach:** Participants who walk into Online Centres are typically greeted and encouraged to share their stories through an informal conversation. This seeks to ensure participants feel comfortable. The flexible and learner-centric approach helps participants learn at their own pace and improves overall program retention.

## Program Overview

Good Things Foundation's Future Digital Inclusion program teaches basic digital skills to those with limited IT experience, including many unemployed, disabled, and low-skilled people. The program receives funding from the British government's department of education. FDI leverages Online Centres. These locations provide free or low-cost access to the Internet as well as informal, flexible and personalized training in basic digital skills. FDI provides a range of training resources, including the Learn My Way online platform. This platform is a website built by Good Things Foundation and provides free online courses to help develop digital skills.

## Program History

The British Government in 2000 helped establish LearnDirect, an organization that provides employability-linked literacy and numeracy training through a network of community-based Online Centres. Good Things Foundation grew out of that organization in 2014 when Helen Milner, its chief executive, saw the power of the Online Centres and their potential for digital inclusion programs. The Government's Department of Business, then known as the

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, recognized the importance of digital inclusion and provided funding for the Future Digital Inclusion program that year. Since then, funding for the program has come from the Department for Education.

## Types of Digital Skills Imparted

The program focuses on imparting basic digital skills, including:

1. Digital literacy
2. Using a computer or mobile device
3. Basic internet usage
4. Online safety
5. Finding a job online
6. Improving health online
7. Managing money online
8. Accessing public services online

The FDI program provides training in these skills to promote inclusion in the digital economy and assist people in becoming more self-sufficient. Individuals can request to learn skills they find interesting, such as digital photography. Some parents also come in to learn basic digital skills that they can pass on to their children.

## Business Model

### Good Things Foundation

Good Things Foundation runs as a charitable organization and receives almost 80 percent of its funding from the government. The remaining 20 percent is contributed by companies, trusts and foundations. It has an annual operating budget of nearly \$4 million alongside a \$7 million grants budget for local partners.

### Online Centres

Most Online Centres are funded by community organizations and local governments. Good Things Foundation provides the resources and training materials required to deliver the FDI program at these locations and may offer some funding to support it. The foundation provides funding to 169 Online Centres through the FDI program. Online Centres raise funds by running small enterprises such as a café or gym on the premises. These generate revenue and help sustain operations. Centres also bring in revenue through their libraries or through chargeable courses for more advanced skills.

## PARTICIPANT SOURCING AND SELECTION

### Target Segment and Value Proposition

About 11.5 million adults in the United Kingdom lack basic digital skills, according to Good Things Foundation estimates. The FDI program is targeted towards members of society who may not know how to use digital tools in everyday life. Participants are often older, from disadvantaged backgrounds, unemployed, recent immigrants, or disabled.

The program does not reach out to specific individuals, but targets communities and locations that have a higher occurrence of poverty. People who lack basic digital skills often face societal exclusion as the world is increasingly moving online. They tend to be less educated and lack the ability to access information that would teach them new skills. This limits their ability to find jobs or access health services.

FDI provides people with an open and in-person training program that is delivered in a community setting. It helps individuals gain the confidence and skills to perform day-to-day digital tasks, complete transactions, and access government services.



## Application and Selection

Good Things Foundation does not operate a formal participant outreach and selection process. It relies on the Online Centres to serve as outreach hubs for potential participants. They attract people from a range of backgrounds by operating as an open and social space, much like a community center.

Participants are typically referred to an Online Centre by jobs agencies, friends, family members, or other partner organizations. Some participants also may learn about the program while visiting an Online Centre to use its other facilities. In such scenarios, those who are interested can speak with staff to learn more about the program and begin training.

Online Centres are increasingly undertaking outreach initiatives where staff visit communities and neighborhoods to meet with target participants and conduct information sessions.

## Learner Profiles

The FDI program caters to a wide range of people from diverse backgrounds with different attitudes towards

learning. Good Things Foundation has conducted longitudinal surveys of participants in the program and identified three broad trajectories that most learners follow:

1. **Ownership:** Participants who follow this trajectory are typically those who have experienced a period of crisis such as unemployment, homelessness, or a disability. After going through the crisis, they decide to invest in their improvement. These participants are more likely to take ownership of their learning and rely on the Online Centres for support and solutions to specific problems. They also tend to learn faster as they develop more confidence in their new skills.
2. **Episodic:** These participants often have faced employment-related crises prior to joining the program. They tend to look at Online Centres for employment support and prioritize job-seeking over wider digital skills. These learners do pick up digital skills but often do not end up taking ownership of their learning. They learn valuable skills that help them to engage digitally, but not to the same extent as ownership learners.
3. **Reluctant:** Reluctant learners have a similar background to that of episodic learners but are generally uninspired by the use of the Internet and digital technologies and tend to learn at very slow pace. Reluctant users often look at digital tools and ask, "What's in it for me?"

Understanding the range of learner profiles has enabled Good Things to manage and retain learner excitement. The challenge of disengagement among episodic and reluctant learners limits the potential upside that basic skills training offers. The program addresses this challenge in two ways:

1. **Digital Champions:** These are former participants of the program who come back to the Online Centres to help train and mentor current participants. Digital champions are typically better equipped to understand the challenges that learners are facing, and the informal, in-person approach helps make participants more comfortable.





Photo © Good Things Foundation

2. **Interest-led Learning:** This involves looking at digital skills training through the lens of practical use, such as learning how to use a digital camera and send pictures over email. Many participants are unaware of how digital tools can be used, and by framing the training as a life skill, participants often take more ownership.

## PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

### Program Training and Approach

The FDI program has no fixed duration as learners have different starting points and learn at their own pace. Participant engagement with an Online Centre can vary from several weeks to a few months.

Online Centres typically start by assessing participants' prior knowledge and skills through an informal conversation. This helps determine which skills should be taught.

The program is designed to fit the individual needs of participants. Some learners may choose to participate in group sessions while others may want to follow a one-on-one or smaller group format. Most Online Centres also offer opportunities for peer learning through the digital champions initiative.

All training material is developed internally by the Good

Things Foundation and distributed to the Online Centres network. The program offers physical training materials, as well as the online Learn My Way platform and Capture IT. Capture IT is a tool outside Learn My Way that tracks skills acquired by participants and develops records for them. The information is saved within the program's Management Information Tool and is accessible to all Online Centres within the network. Good Things does not mandate a strict approach to training, but instead allows for flexibility in each location. This ensures Online Centres can customize content to fit their local users' needs.

The FDI program can expand because of the flexibility of its training resources and approach. The materials and the Learn My Way platform have been developed to promote transferability. Learn My Way is open to anyone outside the Online Centre network and can be easily accessed through the platform's website.

Online Centres can measure course progression using the Learn My Way platform or with the Capture IT templates provided to them. Forty percent of learners use the Learn My Way platform, and the rest leverage physical resources at the Online Centres. Instructors often are program alumni or volunteers who believe in the foundation's vision of digital inclusion and are willing to devote the time and effort towards the program.

## PROGRAM IMPACT

### Learning Goals

Good Things Foundation strives for a world where everyone benefits from the use of technology, and people are happier, healthier, better off, digitally able, active, and equal.

FDI helps to build digital basic skills. Learners typically go through several stages during the program as they increase their understanding of digital tools. They should feel confident about using digital technology when the program ends. Other skills include:

1. Using online banking
2. Applying for jobs online
3. Accessing national and local government services
4. Using the Internet to communicate

### Indirect Economic Benefits

#### Benefits Due to Digital Use

As FDI learners develop digital skills, they begin to use cost-effective online channels for their transactions with public services. This direct channel provides an economic benefit, which is evaluated through a participant survey at the end of the program. Learners are asked how their behavior has changed in relation to government services. The answers are used to estimate the reduction in calls and visits to public services as a result of their increased adoption of digital options.

This shift led to a decline of visits in 2016 and 2017 to general practitioners and emergency departments, as well as fewer calls and visits to job centers. The organization estimates the reduction in demand for local council service reached \$64 million.

#### Wider Economic Benefits

The broader benefits include increases in employment, earnings and retail transactions, efficiencies in

communication, time savings from using online channels, and reductions in government spending on benefits and healthcare. In 2016 and 2017, the organization estimated the program's wider economic benefit at about \$130 million.

### Key Social Benefits for Learners

Basic digital skills help learners move toward employment, further training, or volunteering roles after the program. Learners witness improvements in their health as they are better able to manage healthcare online and access health advice remotely. Participants can build stronger relationships with friends and families as digital tools, such as social media platforms allow people to stay in touch with their loved ones online and make new friends. The program also helps participants to better access their hobbies and develop an improved sense of confidence and independence.

### Key Benefits for Government

The program has direct economic benefits due to a shift away from more costly in-person delivery of government services. More broadly, increased levels of digital skill literacy help to boost personal productivity and help people find work, reducing vacancies in the labor market.

### Program Impact

Good Things Foundation has helped more than 1 million people through its FDI program since 2010. Around 90 percent of the program's learners progressed to further learning in 2016 and 2017, while around 60 percent of them reported feeling happier due to the increased social contact that resulted from their experience at the Online Centres.

Overall, 36 percent of FDI learners go on to receive further qualifications in IT, math, and English from local colleges and adult education services. This is nearly double the rate of other external further education providers.



## OPERATIONS

### Resources

Good Things Foundation's core team has about 60 people in Sheffield, England and 12 people in Sydney who are a part of the new emerging team in Australia.

### Key Staff Skills and Competencies

The technology and digital teams are critical to the success of the foundation as they are responsible for designing and maintaining all the digital platforms, including Learn My Way. The marketing and sales teams help spread awareness about the initiative's programs. Another team that includes the chief executive communicates with government and helps ensure continued funding.

### Key Learnings

Good Things Foundation has identified four program elements that drive the success of the FDI program, especially when compared to other further education courses:

1. **Ease of Access:** Online Centres are located in the heart of disadvantaged communities. This makes it cheaper and easier for less-motivated learners to undertake the program.
2. **Familiarity and Informality:** The open-door, people-centric model of Online Centres is less intimidating to learners who may have had a negative experience in formal education or limited education at all.
3. **Low Barriers:** Some cultural groups may be unwilling to attend mainstream training for cultural reasons, such as mixed gender classrooms. This is alleviated by placing training within community centers.
4. **Support for Families:** Online Centres offer the flexibility to undertake learning that fits around childcare obligations. Some locations also offer childcare facilities to allow full-time training for parents.

### Path to Scalability

The Learn My Way platform, which offers free online learning modules, helps to drive scale by reaching more people through the Internet. Its partnership with the Online Centres network offers a content distribution network that would be impossible with Good Things Foundation's network alone.

Digital Champions recently began providing training and mentorship at the Online Centres, and some are using peer learning to improve the training process and build networks within the community.

## OVERVIEW OF THE KENYAN PILOT PROJECT | Digital Life: Kenya

### Program Origins and Goals

Good Things Foundation launched the Digital Life: Kenya pilot project in July 2017. The program aims to help Kenyans improve their lives through digital access and to evaluate how the Internet can help alleviate economic and social challenges.

Organizers chose Kenya because they wanted to test whether elements of the FDI program could be transferred and replicated in developing countries. They sought to understand the social challenges people in Kenya face and how the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals can relate to digital skills.

### Program Overview and Format

The Digital Life: Kenya program was designed to replicate the United Kingdom's Online Centres network on a smaller scale. The foundation partnered with the Kenyan National Library Service to help library users explore the benefits of digital skills and the Internet. Program members selected 10 libraries to take part in the pilot and receive face-to-face training and 52 more libraries to receive the training and information digitally.

The program also created a buddy program that links 12 Kenyan libraries with Online Centres in the United Kingdom and Australia. Buddies are able to share experiences, challenges, and best practices in digital skills training.

### Results

Digital Life has helped more than 1,000 people in Kenya gain new skills and access the digital world. The program has trained about 20 librarians as "digital champions" on Learn My Way Kenya. The platform was made available to all participants in the pilot.

The program has three critical success factors:

1. **Advocacy and Thought Leadership:** The initiative succeeded in advocating the importance of digital skills in the country and their economic and social benefits.
2. **Access to Free Resources and Tools:** The pilot has helped libraries gain access to curriculum as well as tools and resources needed to help library visitors learn basic digital skills.
3. **Progression to Jobs and Further Education:** Participants, most of whom had no digital skills, considered this program extremely valuable. The certificates of the program became increasingly popular with learners, who made use of them in job and university applications.

### Key Learnings

While the Digital Life: Kenya program has had a visible impact in Kenya, key challenges for the program include:

1. **Tailoring Content for the Audience in a New Region:** The Learn My Way resources were designed for people with an English reading age of eight. These materials were not accessible for people from the rural parts of Kenya who had no English language skills.
2. **Replicating a Delivery Method May Not Reach the Same Target Audience:** Unemployed and underprivileged people in the United Kingdom are core users of Online Centres. The Kenyan pilot has mostly reached the demographic that visits libraries and accesses resources there. The most socially and

continues next page



digitally-excluded Kenyans do not visit libraries and thus the program has not reached the same audience as in the United Kingdom. Organizers realized they need to compensate for this by increasing earlier social outreach.

3. **Ensuring a Strong Network Management and Outreach:**

The program team found it difficult to manage the network from a distance. This reinforced the importance of relationships with more local partners to ensure on-the-ground presence and management.

**KEY PEOPLE**



**Helen Milner**  
*Chief Executive*

Helen has been working closely with the

government of the United Kingdom since the 1990s with the aim to ensure that no one is left behind as the world becomes increasingly digital. Milner was also a specialist government advisor of digital engagement for the Public Accounts Committee until May 2017. Helen was listed among United Kingdom's 50 most influential women in technology by Computer Weekly in 2017