



DONEGAL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CLG.
FORBAIRT ÁITIÚIL DHÚN NA nGALL



2020
Case Study
Lot 33-3

ARE YOU CONNECTED?



EUROPEAN UNION

Investing in your future
European Social Fund



Ireland's European Structural and
Investment Funds Programmes
2014-2020

Co-funded by the Irish Government
and the European Union



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall
Donegal County Council



The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 is funded by the Irish Government through the Department of Rural and Community Development and co-funded by the European Social Fund under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020.

Donegal Local Development CLG

Lot 33-3

Case Study Title: Are You Connected?

Theme: Goal 2 Project

Introduction: (Background Information)

This case study outlines a project the Goal 2 team decided to undertake as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Goal 2 team had concerns before the pandemic about the growing trend of digital means for supports and training delivery. This method works very well for a lot of people but for a cohort of people this does not suit. Overnight the pandemic has practically turned things around and digital is currently the primary source for learning and supports. People have had to find new ways to communicate, work, partake in training, socialise, do exercise, shop etc. Because of the severe restrictions in place now and for the foreseeable future the internet has become more and more important as all the above supports are currently being delivered digitally necessitating the use of computers, tablets or smart phones. We are concerned that existing and potential new clients who are not using the internet / have no access to it are being left behind. In the spirit of social inclusion we felt strongly that we needed to explore this situation and try to get an understanding of the impact and identify possible solutions to help address barriers.

Project Description: Need for SICAP Supports

We are all very familiar with the story of the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic. It seems incredible now that the vast majority of us had not heard of ZOOM prior to April 2020. A lot of us from a certain age group had never used Facebook and whilst we were familiar with WhatsApp for phone calls it became a good source for light entertainment during the early dark days of lockdown.

The Goal 2 team got into the stride of working from home and moving our supports to online very quickly. We have a Project Worker within the Goal 2 team who has great PR skills and in particular social media and she played a key role in this area as the pandemic unfolded. We commenced on the first week of the lockdown to call our existing clients to check in with them and let them know that we were open for business. We were constantly emailing clients with links regarding Covid-19 information and also alerting them to supports that they could avail of all online. As the weeks evolved we starting to put together a lot of useful documents for clients around applying for the Covid-19 PUP payment a Health & Wellbeing Pack and the Life Long Learning Team compiled an online Learning Directory. During this period the DLDC website and Facebook accounts seen a significant increase in followers and it became very evident that we were providing the correct supports and information to our



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clients groups who were connected. As this all evolved we as a team became concerned that we were possibly leaving a cohort of our client group behind so we decided to conduct a survey.



Together We Can Overcome

HEALTH & WELLBEING INFORMATION PACK



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**Collated Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection
Information Pack**

**Information for employers, employees and the
self-employed relating to COVID-19
(Coronavirus).**

This document summarises the social welfare payments available for people who have lost work during the COVID-19 pandemic, who cannot work or who are sick.

It also summarises the situation for employers and people who are self-employed.

Survey:

Once we had decided to conduct the survey we brainstormed the best way to go about this. We were still in the middle of the lockdown so we were limited to the methods we could use. After discussion we decided against a postal survey for a number of reasons

- **Safety** :To much handling of mail both going out to the client and the returned completed survey's
- **Efficiency**: Lengthy and complicated. We had discussed the possibility of sending the survey to 200 clients with a hopeful return of 50%. We were all working from home so this would have been impractical to organise.
- **Costs**: €400 - €200 euro initially for the survey questionnaire and a further €200 for stamped addressed return envelopes

After a lot of deliberation, we decided to conduct the survey by telephone as this seemed the most efficient method during the lockdown.

We have ten Goal 2 Project Officers and each Project Officer identified around 10-12 clients who either had no email address or seemed to fit the criteria of non-internet users. We were aiming for a 100 client response rate. We commenced the survey on the 3rd of June and the completion date was 12th June 2020. The Project Officers collectively contacted 120 clients and they completed 107 survey's'.

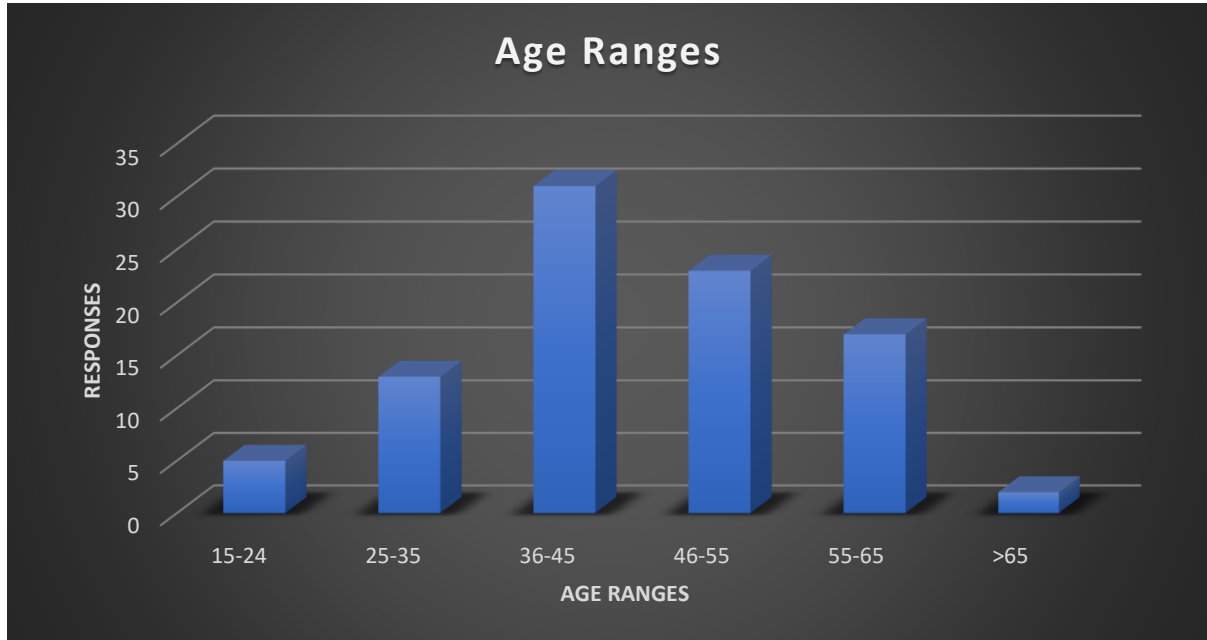
Survey Questionnaire:

We collectively designed the questionnaire taking into consideration the question we wanted answered 'Are You Connected'? Below is a sample of the questions asked?

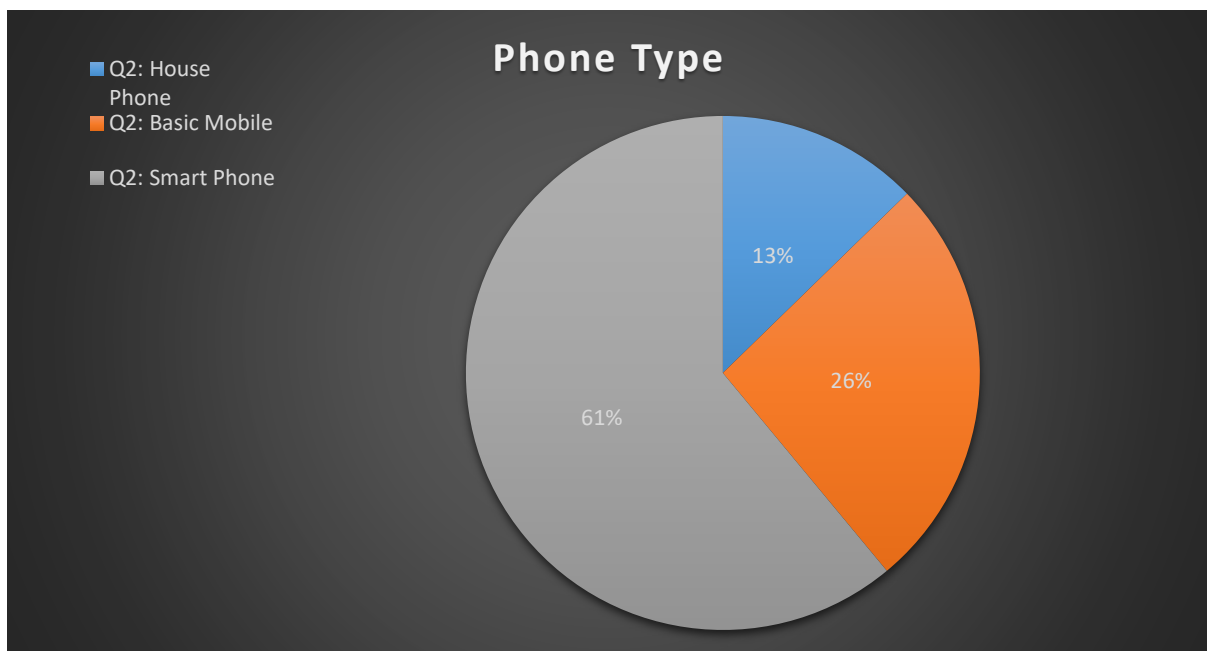
- What type of phone/phone's do you have?
- Do you have broadband Yes No
- Would you like to be able to use the internet? Yes No
- Do have your own computer? Yes No
- Do you have access to a computer?
- What is currently preventing you from using the internet?
- What support would enable you to become an internet user?
- What is the main reason you would need/like Internet solutions?

(see appendix for survey questionnaire)

Outputs & Outcomes:

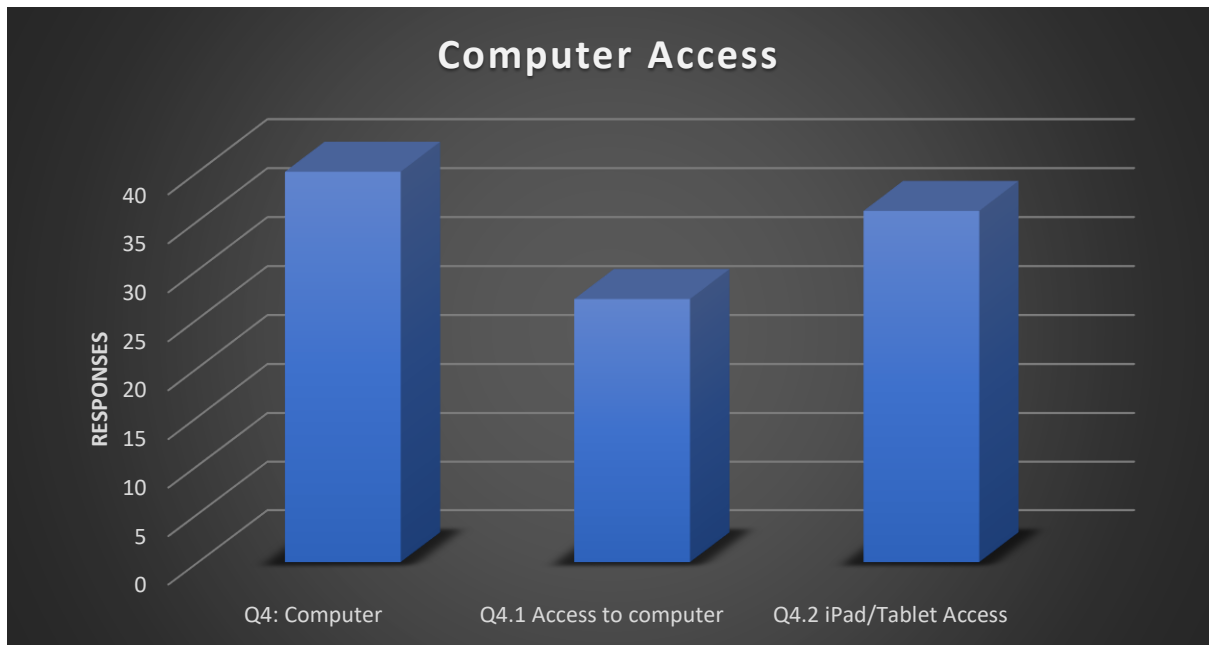


The majority of the survey respondents were in the 36 – 65 age range. The highest being age 36 – 45.



The most remarkable information gathered from the survey was the high number of smartphone users. This would not be significant in general terms but we had selected clients who did not seem to be IT users and it had an impact on the survey results.

It is worth remarking that a lot of the clients who answered yes to having a landline phone also answered yes to having a basic mobile



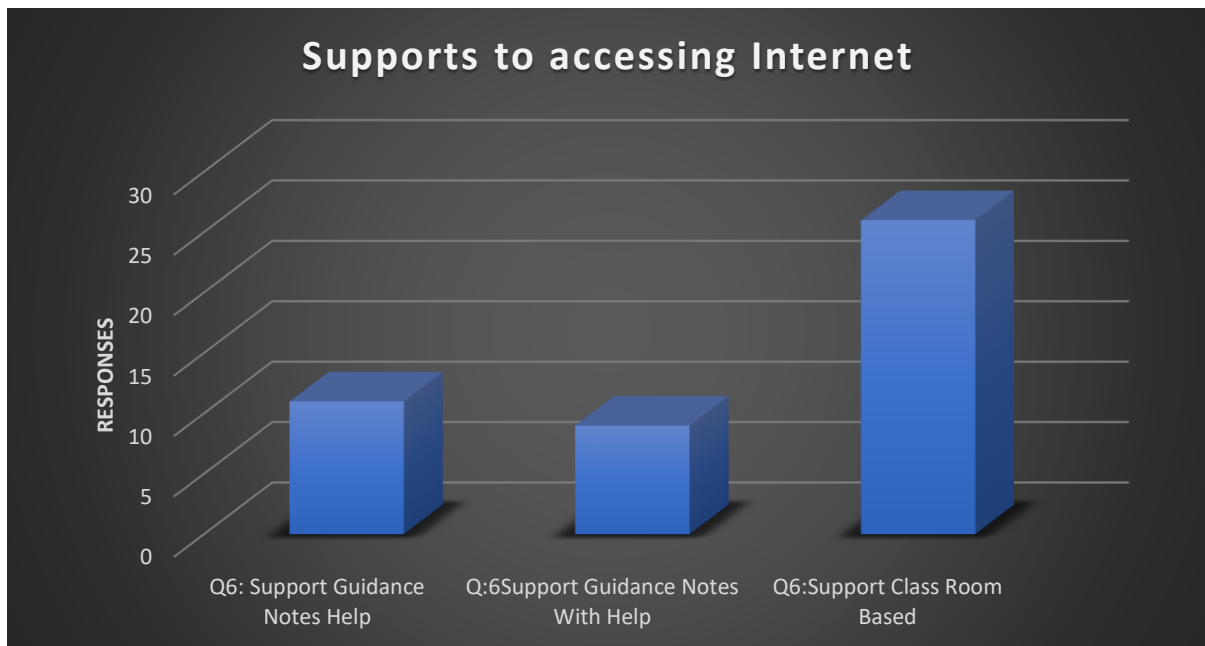
The response to these questions is worth exploring:

40 responders had computers but some Project Officers explored this in more depth and discovered that some clients did not use their computer or had not used it for a long time.

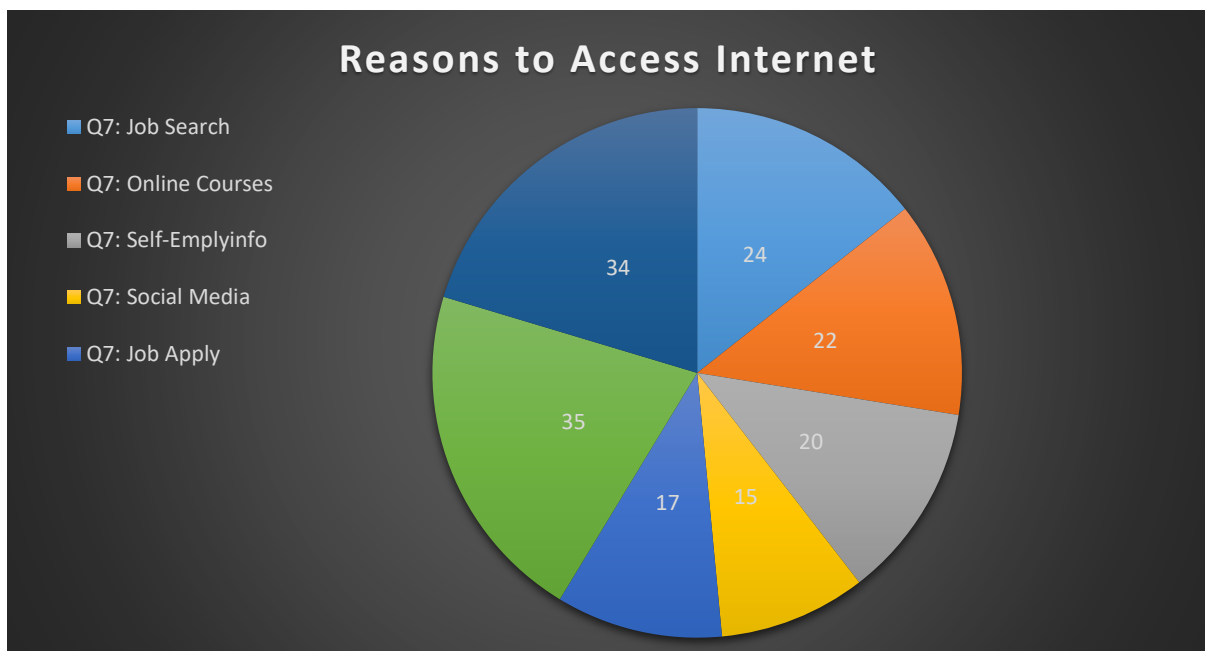
27 Have access to a computer but again this does not necessarily mean that they are using it

(It is worth noting that 61% of the responders that have a smartphone and, particularly the younger aged responder were only using this equipment for social media, etc.)

What support would enable you to become an internet user? 45 people answered this question



***24% of the responders indicated that they would like classroom-based support to access the internet. These responders had also indicated they only had a basic mobile or house phone.**



Most of the responders who answered this question gave more than one reason

The most common reasons were searching for information and banking/shopping. Given the period for the survey, this is understandable as we were still in a controlled lockdown.

We, therefore, focused on the sectors where we provide support and, notably, this represented 62% of the responders.

Job searching (Employment Supports). Attend online workshops/courses (Life Long Learning). Self-employment information (Enterprise Supports) this made up 62%.

Sample of Comments:

- Use a smartphone for everything but this can be slow
- I tried to do a course on Alision.com using my smart phone but had problems
- Could do some of my work online but would need a better connection
- Would prefer to do things in person for the social aspect
- Have childcare issues so would rather get a childminder and attend courses/workshops in person
- Live alone no money left for the internet when all the bills are paid

Overview of results:

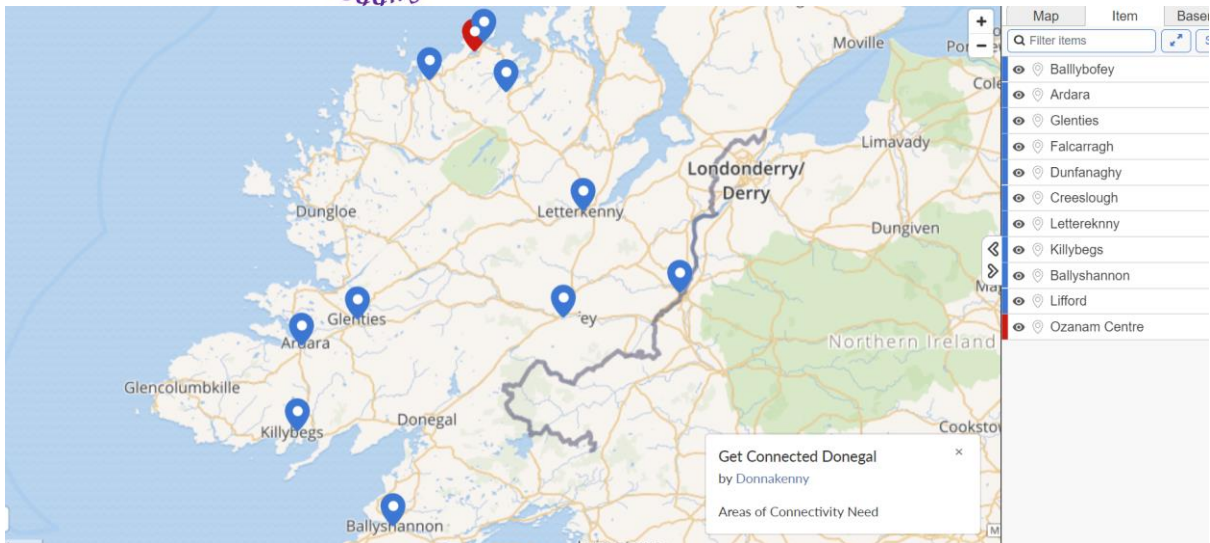
When we commenced compiling the data collected from the surveys it became apparent quite early that smartphones were more in use by our clients than we anticipated. This did have some impact on the survey but overall we did manage to identify some issues.

- A high level of the responders are depending on their smartphones only for internet usage
- There seems to still be a preference for classroom-based support
- The clients living in areas within the Gaeltacht seem to have the biggest problem with connectivity
- The over 55 age group, in particular, seem to have no interest in using the internet but the same people went on to state that they would like to attend classroom-based training to enable them to become internet users

It is important to note that the responders identified for the survey were perceived to be minimal to non IT users so the questionnaire was designed to capture information to discover what we could do to support these clients. Some of the project officers found it difficult to get any significant information from responders once they had identified they had a smartphone. However, it is still significant that the non-users were also the people who had the basic mobile phones, and notably, this was 39% of the responders.

Follow up Responses to survey to date:

1st Response: 24 responders indicated that they would like to attend classroom based training to help them become Internet Users. We identified the areas these clients were located (see map below for locations)



We looked at the responder's locations and identified that we could group Cresslough, Falcarragh and Dunganaghy together (We had 8 responders in these areas) to run the first workshop. We decided on Dunfanaghy as it was the central town.

The workshop was organised for Thursday the 24th September in the Ozanam Centre in Dunfanaghy. Aisling Sharkey LLL Project Officer was to deliver the workshop.





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Getting Connected Workshop



Date: Thursday 24th September 2020

Time: 2.30pm

Venue: Ozanmam Centre, Dunfanaghy

Six clients had confirmed they would attend the workshop. For health and safety reasons we had to cancel the workshop on the 23rd September as there was an outbreak of the Covid-19 virus in the local community.

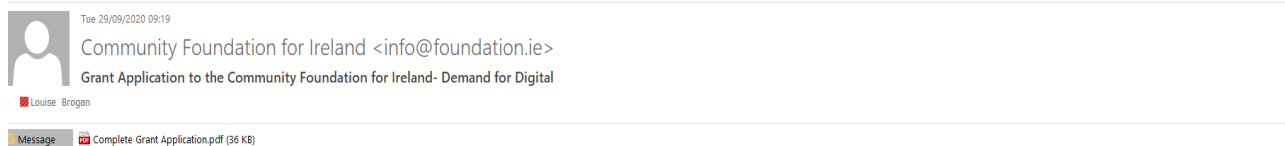
2nd Response: We have a concern that people are dependent on their smartphones for internet usage. This is more than adequate for information general supports etc. Our concern is that the smart phone is not going to be sufficient for education and training. Blended learning is here to stay and as more people become unemployed the lack of personal IT equipment will become an issue. Our Employment Support Project Officers already are having issues with remote working with clients who only have a smartphone to work on documents, job applications etc.

We decided to identify community venues and check if they have computer suites that the public can access. We had then intended exploring the possibility of doing a pilot project

where we would work with the community venue and provide vouchers for the clients to have the usage of a computer suite when they had such a need. After contacting a few community venues we quickly realised that they had either never had a computer suite or had to close it due to the computers being too old and they did not have the funds to replace them. We immediately decided that we needed to try and source funding to purchase lap top computers that we could use in the following way.

- We would like to purchase twenty laptops
- Ten will be used to take out to rural community venues throughout Donegal to deliver tailored workshops/training for clients who want to get connected
- Ten laptops will be used on a library type basis for clients who cannot afford their own equipment and have a genuine need to use a laptop for training/education

We have now made an application to Comic Relief for the ‘Demand for Digital’ grant strand. The closing date was the 30th September so we are awaiting the outcome of this application.



You have submitted your RTE Does Comic Relief: Demand for Digital proposal to The Community Foundation for Ireland

Please note your reference for this online application is: OGA009887

As per your application, you have agreed to the following:

- I confirm that if successful, my organisation will use the grant only for the project detailed in the grant application.
- I confirm that for any changes that need to be made to the project or budget, I will contact The Community Foundation for Ireland for authorisation, before making these changes.
- I confirm that my organisation will provide an Outcome Report within 12 months of receiving the grant.
- I confirm that any invoices or receipts of €500 or more will be kept and submitted to The Community Foundation for Ireland, if required.
- I confirm that The Community Foundation for Ireland and corporate donors who have contributed to the Fund can promote our grant project(s) on digital and print media and my organisation will collaborate with The Community Foundation for Ireland for any such promotion, including but not limited to videos, quotes and photography.
- I confirm to, where appropriate, mention The Community Foundation for Ireland and RTE Does Comic Relief on any promotional material associated with this grant.

Please keep a record of this email as a reference to this agreement.

What Happens Next?

1. You have the option to print the 'completed application' attached for your records
2. Your application will be assessed to make sure your request fits the funding criteria.
3. Following receipt of all information requested, your application will be considered by a panel who will decide if your request can be funded.
4. Please refer to the criteria document for the grants timeline.

Please contact covidresponse@foundation.ie for any queries in relation to this application. Don't forget to quote your online application number above.

The learning from this project is as follows:

What Worked Well?

- We decided to complete the survey via telephone because of the lockdown restrictions. This was very successful as we had a 90% response rate and as we were calling from our work mobiles so there was no financial cost (we have free calls). We are conscious that in this instance we were contacting existing clients that we had a relationship with so this method might not always work so well
- We did manage to get an answer to the main question of the survey ‘Are You Connected?’ As we discovered that around a third of the responders weren’t using the internet.

- The information collected from the survey was very timely and relevant and it enabled us to make the application for equipment to comic relief
- The survey results has also given us great insight into how we need to be supporting our clients in this ever evolving digital world and this will be reflected in our 2021 SCIAP Goal 2 Action Plan.
- We were able to identify that 62% of the responders use the internet for the types of supports we provide

What Did Not Work?

- The survey questionnaire was limiting when a responder identified that they were using a smart phone as this meant they moved on to the last question. Which asked what they used the internet for?
- It is proving difficult to move forward with our responses to the findings in the survey. The cancellation of the workshop we had planned for the 24th September was the correct thing to do. With the ongoing pandemic restrictions and the now growing likelihood that it will be a period of time before people will feel comfortable to come into a community setting we have a concern that will lose momentum with the clients who had engaged.
- We will have to explore other opportunities to purchase the laptops should our grant application to comic relief being unsuccessful as they are key to us addressing quite a lot of the barriers identified in the study
- Poor connectivity in the Gaeltacht region was mentioned by a few responders as a reason for why they are not connected. This is not an issue we can address
- 22% of responders stated that they felt broadband was too expensive for them. Again this is not something we can address

When the pandemic hit we had to move our supports online. We undertook this survey out of a real concern that the people of Donegal that we support/ want to support through the Goal 2 SICAP programme were being left behind. The survey has confirmed that whilst a lot more people than we would have assumed are connected through smart phones there is a significant number of people still not connected. It is worthwhile stating that some of the responders are choosing not be connected but others for reasons we have highlighted are not. We will expand on the survey and liaise with our fellow colleagues throughout the country to identify possible additional solutions to getting our clients connected. We are in no doubt that this new digital way of delivery will continue to evolve and we will have a lot of challenges to overcome to try and make sure our clients are not left behind.