

Frequently asked questions about the Harnessing Technology Grant

This information was taken from the BECTA website:

http://localauthorities.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=fd&catcode=la_fu_02&rid=14501

What happened to the separate grants to fund connectivity and infrastructure and e-learning credits?

We are replacing the previous separate technology grants with a new Harnessing Technology Grant in order to better support the objectives of the Government's e-strategy 'Harnessing Technology'. We want to encourage a co-ordinated approach to technology in schools, allowing schools and local authorities (on their behalf) to spend the funding as they see fit based on locally agreed priorities.

What are the revenue implications of this grant?

Local authorities and schools investing in ICT infrastructure should be aware of any ongoing revenue costs for services provided through the 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 (eg to cover the costs of broadband connectivity) and 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 where this is considered appropriate.

I am from a rural local authority. Will I be able to afford to provide increased bandwidth due to the higher costs involved in rural areas?

To ensure that rural local authorities continue to have the levels of funding required to achieve effective levels of technology service and connectivity, which may be more expensive in rural areas, we are retaining some use of sparsity in the calculation throughout this spending review period. In addition, an extra ?75 million has been allocated to local authorities in 2007-08 on the basis of their relative sparsity – this is primarily to help rural local authorities upgrade and extend their broadband infrastructure for schools.

Does the Harnessing Technology grant include funding for the Computers for Pupils programme?

No, the Computers for Pupils initiative is a separate programme which runs from 2006-08. Further announcements will be made on funding for this programme (or any subsequent successor) in due course. Any updates will be made available on the [Teachernet website](#).

How much has my local authority been allocated through the Harnessing Technology Grant?

Information about annual Harnessing Technology Grant allocations to local authorities for 2008-11 can be found on [Teachernet](#) (along with details on other capital allocations).

How much of the Harnessing Technology Grant can the local authority retain centrally?

Local authorities can retain up to 25 per cent of the Harnessing Technology Grant centrally, to ensure that all schools receive the benefits of aggregated purchasing. It is possible for the local authority to retain more than 25 per cent of the allocation centrally if there is evidence that this will achieve further efficiencies through aggregation, but this has to be agreed with schools (ie through the School Forum).

Is there a match funding requirement associated with the Harnessing Technology Grant?

The Harnessing Technology Grant is not ring-fenced so there is not a requirement for local authorities to match fund the capital allocation distributed through the Harnessing Technology Grant. However, local authorities should expect to contribute revenue funding in line with previous years (eg to cover the revenue costs of broadband connectivity) or to consult with their schools about the use of school revenue budgets where this is considered appropriate.

How is the Harnessing Technology Grant distributed?

The Harnessing Technology Grant is paid quarterly to local authorities through the Standards Fund payment mechanism, according to the following timetable:

2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
May 2008	May 2009	May 2010
September 2008	September 2009	September 2010
December 2008	December 2009	December 2010
March 2009	March 2010	March 2011
April 2009	April 2010	April 2011

By what date does the money need to be spent?

ICT funding allocated through the Harnessing Technology Grant for 2008-09 must be spent by 31 August 2009.

What can the Harnessing Technology Grant be used for?

The Harnessing Technology Grant is capital funding so can be used for any ICT-related capital purpose (eg purchases of ICT infrastructure and equipment).

Can the Harnessing Technology Grant be spent on ICT-related support services (eg managed service provision contracts; buying in expert staff to support implementation of the learning platform)?

The Harnessing Technology Grant is capital funding and cannot be used for any revenue purpose. Becta advises that local authorities consult with their finance teams who will be able to state what is/is not eligible for purchase using this funding. Other sources of funding (such as the School Development Grant) can be used to cover technology-related revenue costs.

Does the Harnessing Technology Grant incorporate money for digital curriculum resources that was previously available as e-learning credits?

Yes, the funding for digital content that was previously distributed as e-learning credits has been incorporated into the Harnessing Technology Grant. Local authorities are therefore encouraged to continue to fund an appropriate level of digital curriculum resources for traveller education support services, hospital schools and pupil referral units and similar provision (which were previously entitled to e-learning credits).

Can the Harnessing Technology Grant be used to pay for subscriptions to services which supply digital curriculum resources on an ongoing basis?

The costs of annual subscriptions to digital content services can be met through the Harnessing Technology Grant, provided that the content being paid for (or a perpetual licence to use that content) 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 content for a specified time period which is longer than one year.

Are nursery schools eligible to receive Harnessing Technology Grant funding?

All maintained schools are eligible for Harnessing Technology Grant funding, including nurseries.

On what basis should the local authority allocate Harnessing Technology Grant funding to individual schools?

It is up to the local authority to decide how they devolve the Harnessing Technology Grant funding allocation to individual schools – this is to give local authorities flexibility to use the funding to meet local priorities most effectively. It is recommended that schools are consulted over the allocation method (eg via the Schools Forum).

My local authority has been allocated "Other ICT" funding in the form of supported borrowing, to use for the Computers for Pupils project. What is supported borrowing and how can it be accessed?

Supported borrowing is funding method that assists local authorities in raising and repaying loans for capital purposes. Within this funding method, local authorities receive revenue funding that will support them in raising and paying off a loan to the value of their supported borrowing allocation, over a long period of years. The local authority can decide to use the revenue funding in order to raise and pay off a loan (which must be used for a capital purpose); or not to raise a loan, in which case the revenue funding can be used for any revenue or capital purpose. Supported borrowing is administered by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), and forms part of the Revenue Support Grant Settlement to local authorities; it is not paid by the DCSF or Becta.

Is supported borrowing (listed as "Other ICT") available beyond 2008-09?

No – this additional allocation is only being made in 2008-09, to support local authorities in completing their implementation of the Computers for Pupils project.

Are academies eligible for the Harnessing Technology Grant, and if so how do they access it?

Academies are eligible to receive Harnessing Technology Grant funding – as with other maintained schools this is allocated to local authorities in the first instance who will determine individual school allocations according to local priorities (rather than academies being automatically entitled to an allocation). As it is now standard practice for academies to open in their predecessor school buildings (several years before they are rebuilt or refurbished) it is likely that many of them would require some investment from this grant.

Academies receive Standards Funds directly from the DCSF – are they also paid the Harnessing Technology Grant directly?

No – the Becta-managed Harnessing Technology Grant is not included in the switch to direct payments from the DCSF to academies. It will continue to be managed by Becta and paid to academies via local authorities.

How do voluntary aided schools and trust schools access the funding?

Voluntary aided (VA) and trust schools should receive any Harnessing Technology Grant funding they are allocated directly from the local authority.

Are city technology colleges (CTC) included in the scope of the Harnessing Technology grant?

Yes. Although CTCs are not usually within the scope of Standards Fund grants (and are paid Devolved Formula Capital under separate arrangements), they are eligible for the Harnessing Technology Grant and the pupil numbers used to derive local authority allocations included schools which were CTCs at January 2007. Some of those have subsequently converted to academy status, but whether or not they have done so they are potentially entitled to allocations, using the same criteria as other schools.

I have heard that schools which have recently been rebuilt receive less Devolved Formula Capital - does that mean that they won't receive this grant?

There are now two rates of Devolved Formula Capital: a standard rate for modernised schools and a higher rate for schools waiting to be modernised. Further information on Devolved Formula Capital can be found on [Teachernet](#). Obviously some (but not all) schools that have recently been rebuilt or refurbished may have had considerable investment in ICT as part of that process. Again it is for the local authority to decide individual school allocations based on local priorities.

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