digitalXtra fund enabling digital creativity across Scotland

Digital Xtra Fund provides financial assistance and support for extracurricular digital skills initiatives which can be used as an avenue to deliver and enrich the Young STEM Leader Programme and the STEM Ambassador Programme.

Digital Xtra Fund was launched in 2016 to help boost the interest of young people in computing and technology through extracurricular activities. In March 2017, the Fund became a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) enabling it to partner with a wide range of industry partners. Over the years, the charity has supported various tech initiatives which teach young people skills such as computational thinking, coding, robotics, cyber skills, and data science while also highlighting the future career opportunities these skills provide. The aim is to inspire the next generation of developers, designers and digital leaders to understand and create with technology, rather than simply using it.

Digital Xtra Fund is backed by businesses, government, and individuals with a common will to help young people succeed in a digital world - the goal is for every young person in Scotland to have access to inspiring and meaningful digital tech activities. The Fund's aims are to:
• Enable high-quality, exciting digital skills activities across the country;
• Inspire young people to understand, create, and innovate with technology, not simply consume it;

• Engage industry partners with supported initiatives giving industry experts and young people an opportunity to connect in informal and creative settings.

The model is very straightforward – the Fund works with their partners to identify, finance, and assist extracurricular tech initiatives across the country. Current partners include AWS, Baillie Gifford, CGI, Chroma Ventures (4J Studios), JP Morgan, Scottish Government, and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) as well as Accenture, BT, Cirrus Logic, Fujitsu, Incremental Group, Micro:bit Educational Foundation, ScotlandIS and Skyscanner.

Since its inception, the Fund has awarded 102 grants totalling £725,000 helping schools and educational organisations engage nearly 45,000 young people including recently awarding 22 grants to help schools and organisations engage another 7,292 young people during the 2021/22 academic year.

An announcement about the next round of grant awards (Round VII) - for initiatives delivered during the 2022/23 academic year - will be forthcoming shortly. Grants will be available for schools and organisations who encourage young people (aged 16 and under) to learn digital skills through high quality, extracurricular activities. For more details about how to apply for the fund, check the link: https://www.digitalxtrafund.scot/apply/.

The Fund welcomes applications from UK-registered companies, charities, chartered bodies, local authorities, schools, colleges, or universities actively involved in the provision of computing education or digital technology related activities, especially for

audiences from excluded groups or backgrounds (such as pupils from areas of high deprivation and/or rural isolation, girls and young women and/or minority groups). Eligible organisations can apply for grants from a minimum of £500 to a maximum of £5,000. Whether you are just starting out with a new coding club or planning to participate in global competitions such as FIRST® LEGO® League or the VEX Robotics Competition, Digital Xtra Fund is keen to support any exciting and stimulating extracurricular activities that appeal to the young people.

Digital Xtra Fund also encourages applicants to incorporate programmes such as Young STEM Leader Programme as part of the proposed initiative. And to help contextualise the skills being learned, applicants would also benefit from involving the STEM Ambassador Programme as they can provide positive role models, first-hand examples, guidance, and support during the project.

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