



Digital Democracy Initiative

Ubuntu Economics

Building Sustainable Funding Models for Digital Democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa

Follow along as we unpack practical solutions for pursuing feasible, collaborative sustainability for digital democracy projects in the Sub-Saharan region.



openup:





Station 1: The read



To start, we'll use OpenUp as a case study. Read through our policy brief for some general lessons we've learnt about funding – and pivoting – as an African civic tech non-governmental organisation (NGO).



Responding to Disruptions in Funding: A case study from impact technology

By Gabriella Razzano
Executive Director of OpenUp





Station 2:



Revenue mapping

Click to reflect on these different forms of non-exhaustive revenue options for digital democracy innovators.

Grant income

Individual giving

Client income

Item/service revenue

Alternative income sources

Create a copy and fill out the linked form for your own organisation.



Get form





Grant income



They share your mission.

Philanthropies

Development funders

NPOs (sub-granting)

What they're looking for:

- A clear theory of change with evidence of impact
- Strong governance and non-profit credibility
- Alignment with their current strategic priorities

Things to watch out for:

- Budget flexibility is limited (unless you can access core funds) and unspent funds must be returned.
- Limited opportunities to build reserves.
- Build your full costs into every proposal from the start.



Individual giving



They believe in your impact.

High net-worth individuals

Crowdfunding

Small donors

What they're looking for:

- A compelling narrative and understandable impact
- Tangible, emotionally resonant impact stories
- Connection, which means inclusion into your own story
- Trust, built over time through consistent communication

Things to watch out for:

- Sustaining individual giving requires significant investment in relationship management and fundraising infrastructure.
- The size of grants is a chief limitation, and sustaining these donations is difficult.



Client income



They need your capability.

Government

Private sector

Civil society / NPOs

What they're looking for:

- A specific, demonstrable skill / service they can't easily source
- Reliability, professionalism, and clear deliverables
- A track record
- A sustained, trust-built relationship

Things to watch out for:

- Different clients come with very different payment timelines and administrative demands.
- Government procurement in particular can be slow.
- Cash flow planning is essential.
- It is often easier to maintain, and grow, existing relationships with clients rather than sourcing new clients.



Item/service revenue



They're buying what you have.

Subscriptions

Training

Consulting

Assets

What they're looking for:

- Something useful enough that people will pay for it without a mission reason to do so
- Clear pricing and a reliable user or client experience
- Ongoing investment in quality and relevance

Things to watch out for:

- Productisation is more resource-intensive than it looks.
- Start with services that you already do well (training, consulting) before investing heavily in standalone products.
- Explore your current “assets” – how might these be sold, or rented?



Alternative sources



They see your impact reputation.

Impact investors

Prize & innovation funding

CSR funds

What they're looking for:

- Impact investors: a credible model with demonstrable returns – preference for social entrepreneurs or hybrid models
- Prize funding: a strong, well-framed problem statement and competitive application
- CSR funds: alignment with a company's transformation or social investment mandate

Things to watch out for:

- Each of these has a different logic and eligibility threshold.
- Research carefully before investing time in an application – not all of these are realistic for every organisation at every stage.
- Ensure value alignment.



Station 3:



The pitch problem

How you tell your story to the world will determine who is listening. Consider the following questions:

- How do you currently pitch yourself to existing income sources?
- How are you measuring to tell your story?
- How might you adapt your pitch to different income sources?

Click for a simple set of structural guidelines to follow when “pitching” your organisation with a pitch deck or slide show.



View table





How to structure your pitch



#	Slide	Timing
1.	What is the problem you are trying to solve (and can you put a human face on it?)	20 seconds
2.	What are the solutions to the problem?	60 seconds
3.	How big is the opportunity to scale?	40 seconds
4.	Why are you the best team to implement the solution?	20 seconds
5.	What do you need?	30 seconds



Here's a tip

Evidence-based pitching: Think about how to include data and information to support each slide!



Station 4:



Collective infrastructure

Here we try to unpack the breadth of financial resourcing needs, and look for alternative avenues for collective cost-sharing and collaboration.

Create a copy and adapt the linked form according to your own organisational assets. You can also consider **what you have** that you might be able to **exchange**.



Get form

Consider the following questions:

- What impedes you currently from sharing these costs?
- Are there any ways to help you ease those impediments?





Thank you

for coming with us on this journey

Learn more about the Digital Democracy Innovation
in Sub-Saharan Africa Fund (DDISA) or contact us:

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