

Powerbank Experimentation Q&A

Updated 18.1.2021

Introduction

Fingo Powerbank aims to strengthen the culture of experimentation, learning and sharing within the NGO community and partners. New approaches, tools, methods, technologies, and partnerships can be valuable for development organizations but often require practical testing to find out their potential. Regardless of thriving or failing (or something between), experimentations are considered successful if new understanding, learnings and insights are produced and shared.

Fingo Powerbank releases a new call for experimentations focusing on the use of technologies by member organizations and their local partners. Interested organizations can submit their offer using the provided template according to the timeline explained below in detail. The budget in the offer can range from 3 000 to 10 000 euros. The total budget for experimentations is 80 000 euros. In most cases, the experimentation will be an additional component and budget line to an existing project. This helps your organization to adopt and experiment with new approaches and tools in your programs as well as give Fingo and other organization opportunity to learn.

The overall expected results from the use of these funds are sharable learnings and experiences that will also benefit other organizations and communities. Note that we need to coordinate among each other to avoid very similar parallel experiments to take place and rather keep the cases diverse for maximum learning. We will keep the implementation plan and reporting concise not to burden the already busy organizations unnecessarily.

The guidelines in a nutshell:

- Geographical focus: East Africa
- Start of the experiments: see the timeline
- Funds should be used by the end of the year 2021.
- Reporting: documentation and learning by the end of the experiment. Sharing experiences in a webinar during the implementation.
- Implementation document max. 2 pages, template will be provided (* see key questions below).
- If you need support for example in finding and adopting technology solutions in your pilot, organizing the experiment, please contact Fingo Powerbank staff.
- Utilizing already existing solutions in your concept is perfectly OK if you can bring new added value to your programs (and ultimately to the people and communities).

Powerbank staff will help you before and during the pilot but have limited bandwidth due to several parallel tasks.

Questions and answer regarding the 2nd round of outsourced experimentations

1. Who can respond to the call for the experimentation from Fingo Powerbank?

All Fingo member NGOs

2. Are there particular topics for experimentation that would be of interest to Fingo Powerbank?

The focus of the experimentation is on testing potential technologies to boost the impact, reach, scale and/or efficiency of organizations existing projects. The solutions could be for example around digital education or health services, mobile data gathering, community reporting systems, youth media production, artificial intelligence coding skills, connectivity in rural areas and so forth. Solutions can originate from the local markets and companies as well as from Finland or other areas. Please find examples in the Technology Solutions Portfolio and several reports in the Powerbank sites. Collaboration with companies or organizations developing and providing the technologies is recommended although not compulsory.

We emphasize integrating gender equality into the concept. Disability inclusion and climate change are other possible cross-cutting issues.

The thematic areas (e.g., education, health, livelihoods, child protection etc.) are not restricted but rather depend on each organization and its currently running projects.

3. Why the experimentations focus on the use of technology? Aren't there also many other non-technology solutions available (such as new education methods, better inclusion practices etc.) that could be experimented?

Very true. In general innovation and experimentation do not require the use of technology. Social innovation is an important part of NGOs work. However, in this particular call we are focusing on technology solutions as they are a key part of Fingo Powerbank program and often under-utilized by NGOs.

4. Can NGOs who were conducting experiments with Powerbank in 2020 apply again in the second round? Is it possible to use the second round to scale-up earlier experiment?

Yes, all Fingo member organizations can submit an offer. However, the offers should contain new experimentations, not scale-up of an already tested model.

5. How should NGOs recognize the Principles for Digital Development in the experiment?

There is need to integrate the Principles for Digital Development in the experiment. Adhering to the principles, both in technology-enabled and non-technology led innovations, in development work is important to guarantee a higher possibility of success. There will be a session on Principles for Digital Development training prior to organizations submitting an offer. This will be a good training in supporting organizations in writing the offer. This training is recommended, but not mandatory for submitting an offer.

6. Is Powerbank giving out funds to member organizations?

No. Fingo will not give funding to member organizations. However, Fingo will outsource experimentation work based on the offers submitted by selected NGOs. Fingo will then purchase (i.e., outsource) the experimentation work, including the lessons learned report & presentation, from the member organization. This is like consultancy services: ToR / call for offers is released and interested consultants respond with offers. If the offer is accepted, a contract will be signed, and the work can start. Eventually agreed deliverables should be produced after which consultant can invoice purchaser of services.

7. Is it possible to work as a consortium (e.g., several NGOs and partners together)?

Yes, it is. That is even preferable. Please describe the share of roles, responsibilities and budget between the different stakeholders in the funding application. With multiple Fingo member organizations the total budget in the offer can exceed €10 000 (although not per organization).

8. Are we supposed to develop innovations through experimentations? If yes, what does innovation mean?

Yes, do aim at having an innovation as a result (you may succeed or fail in doing so). You can watch this video to learn more what Fingo Powerbank means by innovation:
<https://www.fingo.fi/powerbank/video-what-innovation-means-development-ngos>

9. What is the timeline for the process?

- Launch and Q&A session: 13th January 2021
- Principles for Digital Development training: 27th January 2021
- Submit the draft offer: 27th January
- Feedback from Fingo: 5th February
- Submit final offer: 20th February
- Receive decision: 26th February
- Forming and signing contracts: by 12th March
- Sharing lessons learned in a webinar: September-November 2021
- Submitting the final report: December 2021

10. Does our organization need to audit the invoiced money?

No. Since Fingo is not funding any organization, but rather purchasing services, we do not need to audit the funds.

Since this experimentation is regarded as a purchased service (and not a grant), like a consultancy service, there is no need for financial reporting. That is, just as a consultant would not be required to do financial reporting, similarly the NGOs implementing these outsourced experimentations would not be required to do so.

The most important component is conducting the agreed work/tasks and deliverables, as documented in the contract (including the two annexes)

The invoices for payment can be sent according to these instructions:

<https://www.fingo.fi/yhteystiedot/laskutusosoitteet> .

11. Do we need to conduct competitive bidding when purchasing e.g., devices with the Powerbank funds?

It is up to your organization to decide if and how you procure products and services. Note that any devices purchased with the invoiced money may be considered as a property of Fingo. However, Fingo does not want to take any devices back from any organization but rather leave them in their original place (e.g., indefinite borrowing).

12. Can we collaborate with religious organizations?

Yes, as long as your experimentation adheres to Official Development Aid (ODA) criteria.

13. How do we need to report?

Fingo will purchase the outsourced experimentation as well as a peer learning presentation and short report from your organization if the offer is accepted. The template for the presentation and the report will be provided by the start of the work. Work should be concluded and invoiced by the end of the 2021.

14. The outsourced experiments are quite small in scale (€3000 - €10000). Where could we apply for more funding?

This Powerbank outsourcing is like an “experimentation voucher” which you can integrate in an already existing project. In this way your organization is also co-implementing the Powerbank and increasing the understanding and use of new tools, methods and approaches with the peer NGO network.

For further funding and scaling-up, please contact Fingo for further information (e.g., Finnpartnership, MFA, EU, corporate collaboration etc.)

15. Should we engage with companies for/during the experimentation?

Not a requirement, but certainly a recommended possibility if useful for the experiment.

16. What if the experimentation fails?

It is OK to try, possibly fail and learn from it. As long as you have tried your best and shared the experiences, lessons learned and recommendation with other NGOs, we'll be happy.

17. What is there are for example 10 organizations all submitting the offer with €10 000 budget? As there is €80 000 in total in Fingos budget, what happens then?

The total amount of funds does limit the scale of experiments per organization. So, based on the offers each accepted NGO/consortium will eventually receive amount between €3000 - €10 000, but it may be lower originally budgeted in the offer.

18. Will there be a call for offers?

Yes, an invitation to tender document will be provided together with application form

19. Can an organization propose experimentation that is similar to one that had been experimented by another organisation in previous round of experimentation?

While this is not likely to happen, where an organisation suggests an exact the same/similar experimentation under a similar project from previous year by another organisation, this would be discouraged in order to have new learnings and diversity. If such a case emerges, it would be discussed with the proposing organisation