

# Prototype Fund Preliminary report in 7 charts

Round 1

# P

GEFÖRDERT VOM



Bundesministerium  
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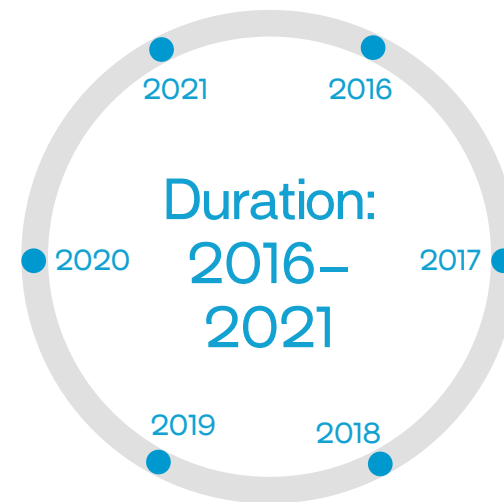
November 2018

# The Prototype Fund in Numbers

The Prototype Fund is a funding program by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), which is managed by the Open Knowledge Foundation Germany. Individuals and small teams can receive funding for the development of open source tools and applications in the field of civic tech, data literacy, IT security and software infrastructure.

We believe that charitable software needs sustainable support, and that the open-source model helps making it sustainable. We want to support digital-social innovation by developer groups that bring diverse skills to technology design.

With this short report we present the evaluation of our first funding round.



# Benchmarks of the first round

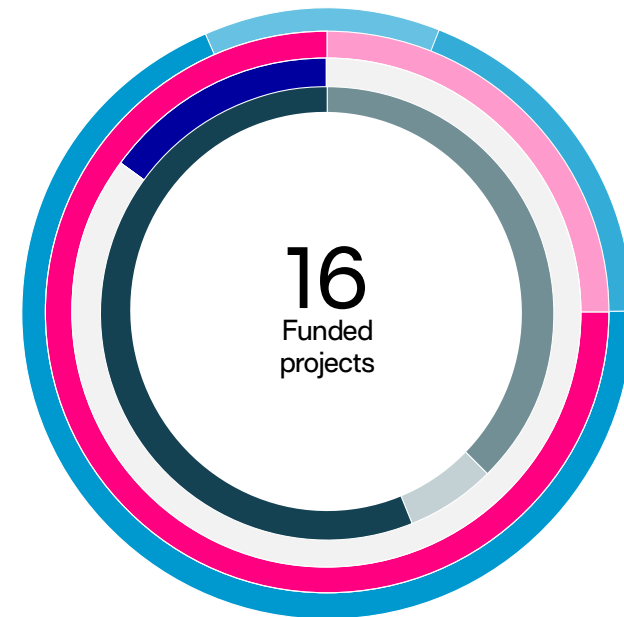
The Prototype Fund is the first funding program for self-employed software developers in Germany. That's why in the first round of applications we explicitly called on individuals to apply. However, the applications showed, that collaborative work in small teams

is preferred by many and corresponds closely to the open-source model. Therefore, we have extended our program to small, often interdisciplinary teams of freelance developers and thus tapped into another target group.



Applications: 479 applications

- Breakdown of topics:
- Civic Tech: 206
  - Infrastructure: 211
  - IT-Security: 38
  - Data Literacy: 14
  - No selection: 10
- Gender distribution:
- Women: 32
  - No selection: 10
  - Men: 437



Funded projects: 16

- Breakdown of topics:
- Civic Tech: 11
  - Infrastructure: 3
  - IT-Security: 2
  - Data Literacy: 0
- Gender distribution:
- funded individuals: 23
  - women account for: 4
- Projects built in cities: 16
- Berlin accounts for: 9
  - other large cities: 6
  - small town: 1
- Project structure:
- Individual projects: 12
  - Teams: 4

# Time is Money

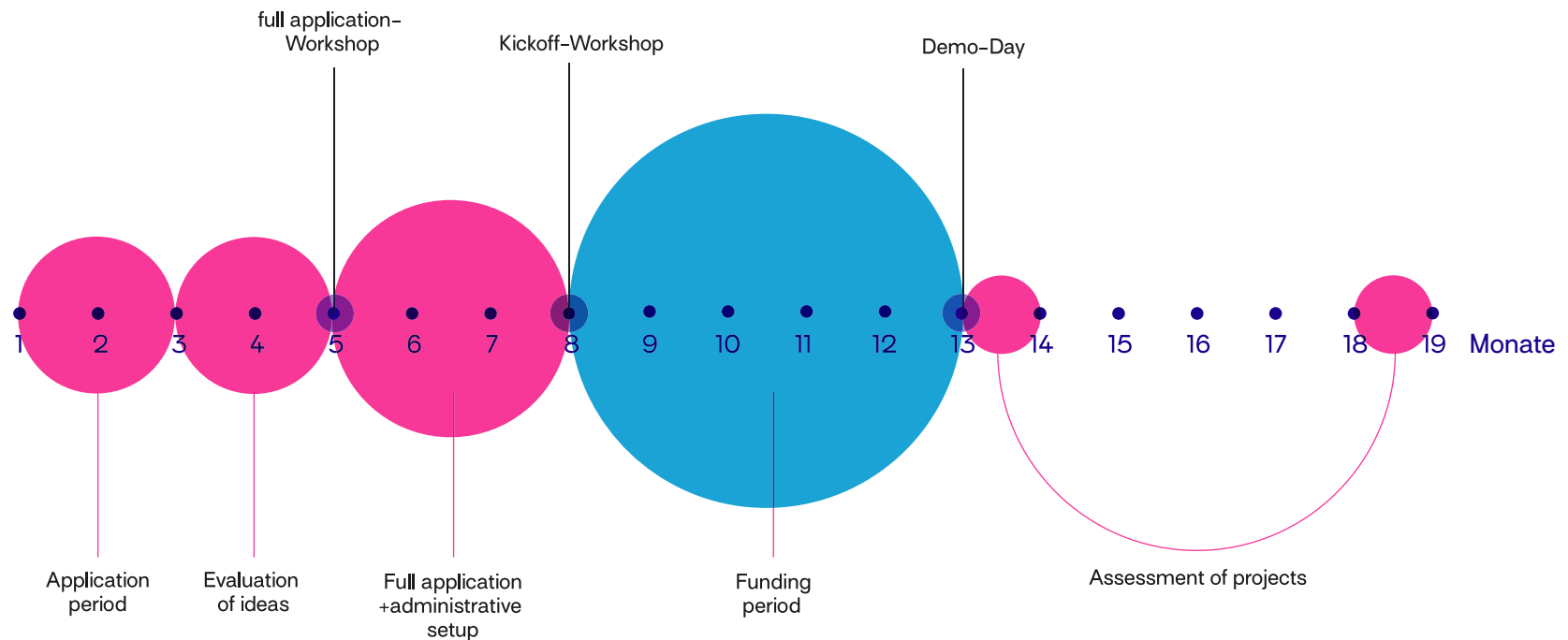
## Quotes:

*„I was very concerned about the funding beforehand because a lot of the burden and responsibility is placed on the project participants, i. e. accounting. In the end it was easy, I would do it all over again. I have grown more courageous.“*

*I had no idea of public funding before, but after the application workshop it was the smoothest application procedure I have ever done. Your concern to lower the application hurdles and make them accessible to the self-employed is great, and has been fulfilled.*

The Prototype fund's support is optimized for a target group that volunteers, is not backed by a large organization and whose time is valuable. Our application process is therefore as low-threshold as possible: in the application phase of the first round, 7 simple questions about the content of the project idea had to be

answered via an online form. We deliberately avoided further documents, sophisticated budgets and submissions by mail. Only when a project is recommended for funding it has to submit the complete application. Then, we support the projects with an application workshop.



# Innovation Ecology

## Quotes:

*“The funding has given me visibility — in the past I was more likely to hide.”*

*“Thanks to the Prototype Fund, I now have experience with self-organized work, which was the beginning of entrepreneurship and funding bureaucracy for me. In that respect, I definitely dismantled personal barriers. I would now trust myself with a different kind of funding and encourage others to do the same.”*

## INNOVATION

So far, public and private funding have mainly been focused on established organisations. Our survey of 12 of our funding projects shows the context in which their ideas originated: The vast majority of them did not come from such organisations, but were implemented only through the dedication of individuals or small groups.

### Origins of project ideas:



Out of 12 evaluated projects:

- 10 ideas originated outside of institutions
- 1 out of a Hackathon
- 1 as scientific project work in uni

## PROFESSIONALIZATION

One thesis of the Prototype Fund is that we want to reach new target groups who have not yet seen public funding as a viable option. In fact, two thirds of the projects had no previous experience with funding in general. One third of the respondents stated that they had professionalised as a result of working on their projects or even changed their profession — to full-time developers.

### Impact of funding:



- Impacts on career: 4 none
- concentration on my project pushed me forward: 3
- did professionalize in my own field: 2
- changed profession/area of work along with the funding: 2

### Assessment of funding opportunities:



Out of 12 projects:

- 8 consortial leads have a more positive assessment towards public funding after the conclusion of their funding period

# Sustainability

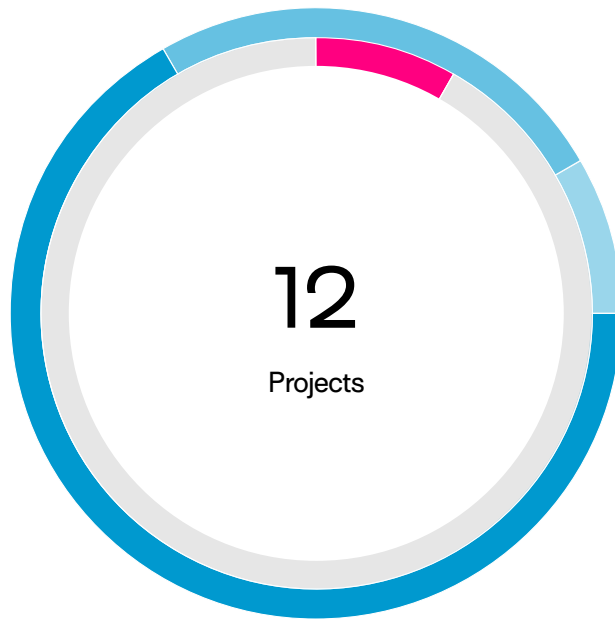
One year after the end of the first round, all funded projects still exist, of which a quarter are still in the prototype stage, the rest are in operational use. After their experience with the Prototype Fund, the

projects look more positively on further funding, start-up and business models, but the search for validation funding is difficult. The short funding period of six months left little time for the projects

to make plans for the time after and to establish the foundations for further financing of the project.

Quote:

*"We would also like to use our project idea commercially. There are initial attempts, but this is an ongoing topic for us. A business model is essential for follow-up funding."*

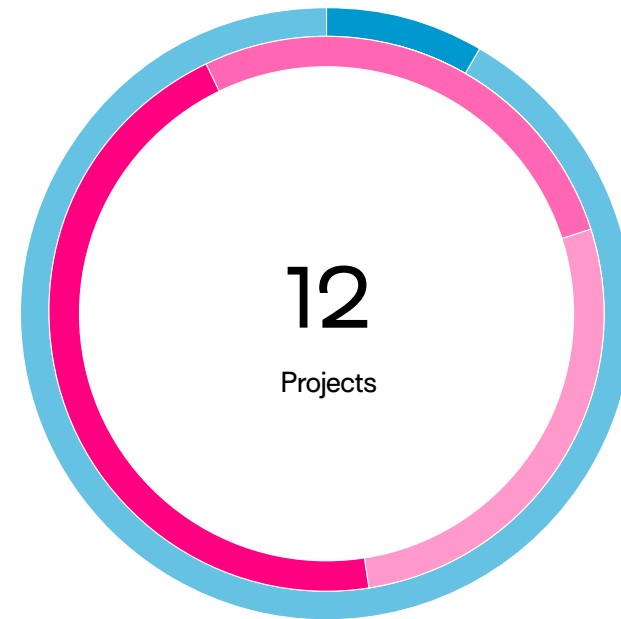


## Before PTF-Funding:

Out of 12 projects:

- 8 had never applied for any kind of funding before
- 3 applied for public funding
- 1 project for support from a foundation

- Former recipients of earlier/other funding but PTF: 1 out of 12



## Post PTF-Funding:

Subsequent funding/continuation of projects:  
out of 12 projects:

- 1 was concluded
- 11 are ongoing

- 5 continue as honorary work
- 3 received further funding from other sources
- 3 are supplying themselves via donations or (small) customisation assignments

# Opportunities and Added Value

From the very beginning, the Prototype Fund has been committed not only to financial, but also ideational support. It is not only about the projects' code, but also about other skill sets such as UX, communication, project planning, general open source practices and safe navigation in the funding landscape.

It is our goal to strengthen the developer community and to impart knowledge that is helpful in continuing the project or implementing new ideas.

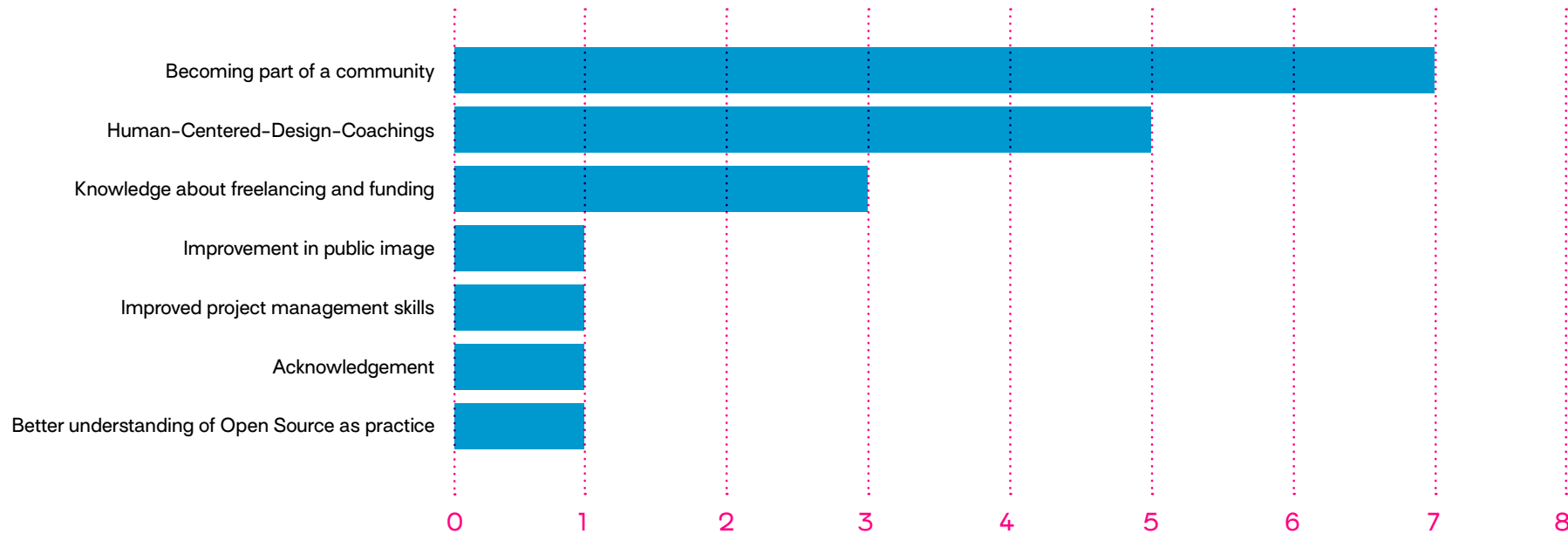
What has made the projects progress, what opportunities resulted from the funding?

## Quotes:

*"Getting to know other projects, presenting your own project and getting feedback was great. We talked to Syrian Archive and SignDict, that was really fruitful."*

*"The coaching in Human-Centered Design was important: We noticed that our original idea for the interface didn't make any sense at all."*

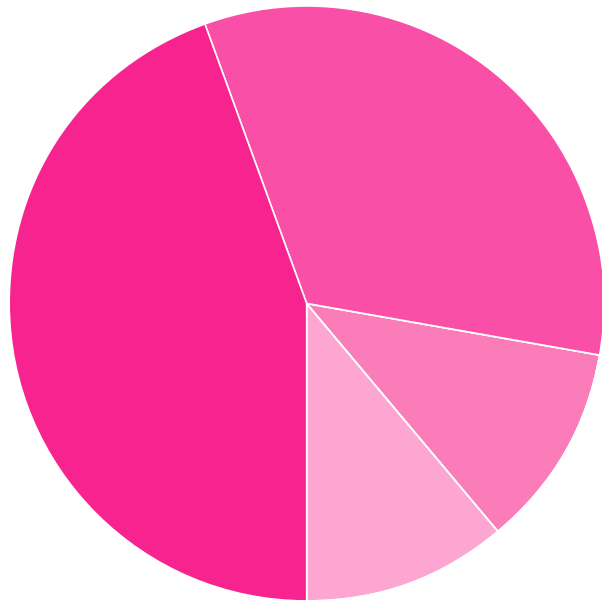
Added Value:



# Lessons learned

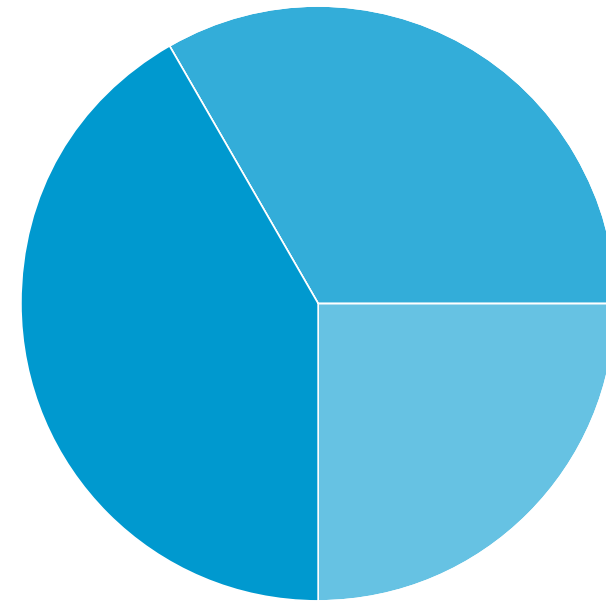
Together with the projects of the first round we learned a lot about where we can change the Prototype Fund and create better offers, but also which challenges occurred more often in the projects. A central issue here was the question of validation funding: How

can projects that have successfully implemented their prototype and want to convert it into a business model be supported in the early start-up phase? And how do you actually measure success in digital volunteering?



## Learnings:

- Keep the schedule flexible and do not fill the six months completely with the development of a feature set, but prioritize the different goals: 4
- Search for contributors and partners before or at the initiation of the funding phase: 3
- Conduct user tests early: 1
- Build financial reserves: 1
- would do it differently: Time planning; planning period post-funding proactively; working alone is sometimes difficult



## Development opportunities of Prototype Fund

- "Communicating the funding modalities more clearly": 5
- "Using an excubator to prepare the projects for the time after the grant work out the next steps": 4
- "More meetings in person during the funding phase to strengthen the network": 3



# Prototype Fund

## AUTHORS

Elisa Lindinger, Katharina Meyer

## TEAM

Adriana Groh,  
Fiona Krakenbürger,  
Julia Kloiber

## TRANSLATION

Michael Peters

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## LAYOUT AND DESIGN

Rainbow Unicorn

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