Safe Online

Practical Toolkit

Building the funding case for child online safety

Evidence based practical guidance for engaging philanthropy, tech companies, and Governments.

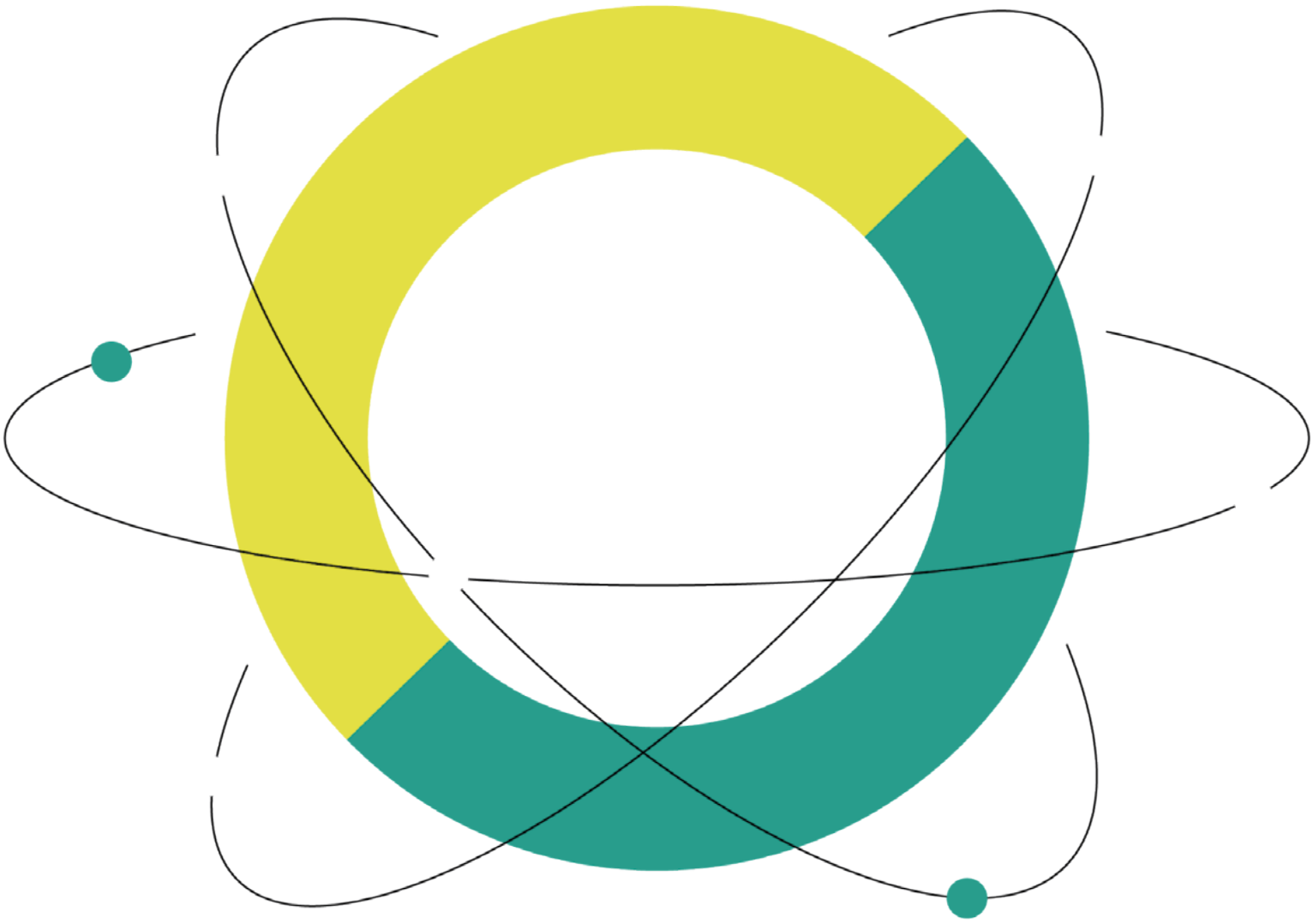


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1. Purpose, Methodology, Scope & Limitations

This toolkit adapts the research-based narrative for child online safety developed by Common Thread (a behavioural change agency) into a practical toolkit for the Safe Online portfolio of grantees. The full document "Strategic narrative framework to mobilise Government, philanthropic and corporate funding for child online safety" is also available here.

Methodology

The underlying research was conducted in two phases using a behavioural framework (capability, opportunity, motivation) to understand not just what funders think, but what would move them from awareness to action.

Phase 1 - Discovery: a desk review of more than 70 internal and external documents (financing decks, evaluation reports, sector research), combined with 8 stakeholder interviews across government, philanthropy, tech, Safe Online staff, and a grantee survey, to map the current narrative landscape.

Phase 2 - Testing: 14 interviews and focus groups with representatives of 17 organisations across philanthropy, government and multilateral bodies, tech companies, and the private sector, used to test draft narrative framings, message components, and creative concepts before they were finalised.

The narrative was broken into five components to test how each element contributes to motivating funding decisions. In practice, decision-makers rarely respond to a single message alone; their willingness to act is shaped by a sequence of signals - how the problem is framed, whether the solution feels credible, and whether there is a clear reason to act now. Testing these components separately helps to identify which formulations were most compelling to each group of funders, before integrating them into a cohesive narrative.

Each component plays a specific role in strengthening the overall case for investment. The problem framing establishes urgency and relevance. The funding rationale creates a timely "why now" moment for decision-makers. The value proposition clarifies your organisation's unique role and why it is well positioned to address the challenge. Evidence and proof build credibility and demonstrate impact. Finally, calls to action translate motivation into a clear next step. The five components are designed to be used together. A strong funding narrative does not rely on one message alone, but on how the components reinforce one another over the funding decision journey.

Scope

The research prioritised the three funder audiences for which the deepest segment-level guidance is available: Philanthropy (large funders, and small and family foundations), Tech Companies (large platforms and mid-sized companies), and Governments (high-income, multilateral funders, and low- and middle-income governments). Three secondary audiences (the broader private sector, media, and the public) were considered directionally, based on more limited input, and are included in this toolkit as lighter-touch guidance rather than fully segmented narrative tracks.

Limitations

This is a snapshot of funder attitudes at the time of research; framings that are relevant today may need to be revisited as the funding and policy environment shifts.

Guidance for the private sector, media, and public audiences is directional only, it draws on a smaller, less systematic evidence base than the three primary audiences.

Message examples are starting points to adapt to your organisation's voice and specific asks, not verbatim scripts to copy directly into funder-facing materials. Framing that resonates can vary by country, culture, and institutional context.

Local testing is recommended before large-scale use, particularly for government and Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) audiences.

This Toolkit Is Helpful For

- Communications leads and fundraising staff building funding pitches, cases for support, and donor-facing materials.
- Programme officers and country teams engaging governments and multilateral partners on financing and policy commitments.
- Partnership and business development staff engaging tech companies and the wider private sector.
- Leadership preparing for high-stakes funder conversations, including with high-net-worth individuals and ministerial briefings.



2. Funding Audiences

This financial narrative prioritises three primary audiences with the strongest potential to unlock funding, partnership, and systems change. While all share an interest in child online safety, they differ in what motivates them to engage, what evidence they trust, and what role they expect your organisation to play.

Philanthropy

Institutional funders and grant-makers seeking catalytic opportunities that align with their mission, values, or personal motivations. They are motivated to fund when they see proof of systemic impact and scalable solutions.

- **Large Philanthropic Organisations:** Institutional foundations and major grant makers focused on long-term systemic change, evidence of what works, and scalable models with sustainable impact.
- **Small and Family Foundations:** Leaner funders often with a narrower scope of philanthropic priorities or geographic focus. They have limited capacity to identify and manage multiple grantees themselves, often valuing an intermediary that can surface, assess, and support strong opportunities.
- **High Net-Worth Individuals (HNWIs):** Individual donors, often acting through personal conviction or family values, who are more likely to respond first to emotionally resonant and human-centred narratives.

Tech Companies

Stakeholders at Big Tech companies are motivated by trust, legitimacy, product responsibility, and maintaining leadership in a rapidly evolving safety landscape. Exact motives often depend on the role within the company.

- **Large Tech Companies:** Well-resourced companies with internal trust and safety, legal, and policy teams. They are less interested in passive vendor pitches and more motivated by collaboration, co-development, and learning that can inform product and policy decisions.
- **Mid-Sized Tech Companies:** Companies with fewer internal resources and less in-house safety infrastructure, making them more open to practical support, external expertise, and solutions that help them respond to evolving standards and risks.

Governments

Public and intergovernmental actors focused on strengthening national systems, responding to fast-evolving digital harms, and motivated to invest when they can see the cost of inaction, and there is proof of scalable, credible solutions.

- **High-Income Governments & Multilaterals:** Higher-income governments (for example, the UK, France, and Australia) and multilateral actors typically focus on system-level outcomes, cross-border governance, large-scale metrics, and investments that demonstrate policy relevance and cost-effectiveness.
- **Low- and Middle-Income Governments:** These governments typically need locally relevant data, practical support, and feasible implementation pathways, especially where digital adoption is rising faster than governance capacity.

Other Audiences

These groups are not the primary focus of the financial narrative, but they shape the wider environment in which funding decisions are made. Messaging for these audiences should support legitimacy, agenda-setting, and partnership building.

Private Sector (non-tech)

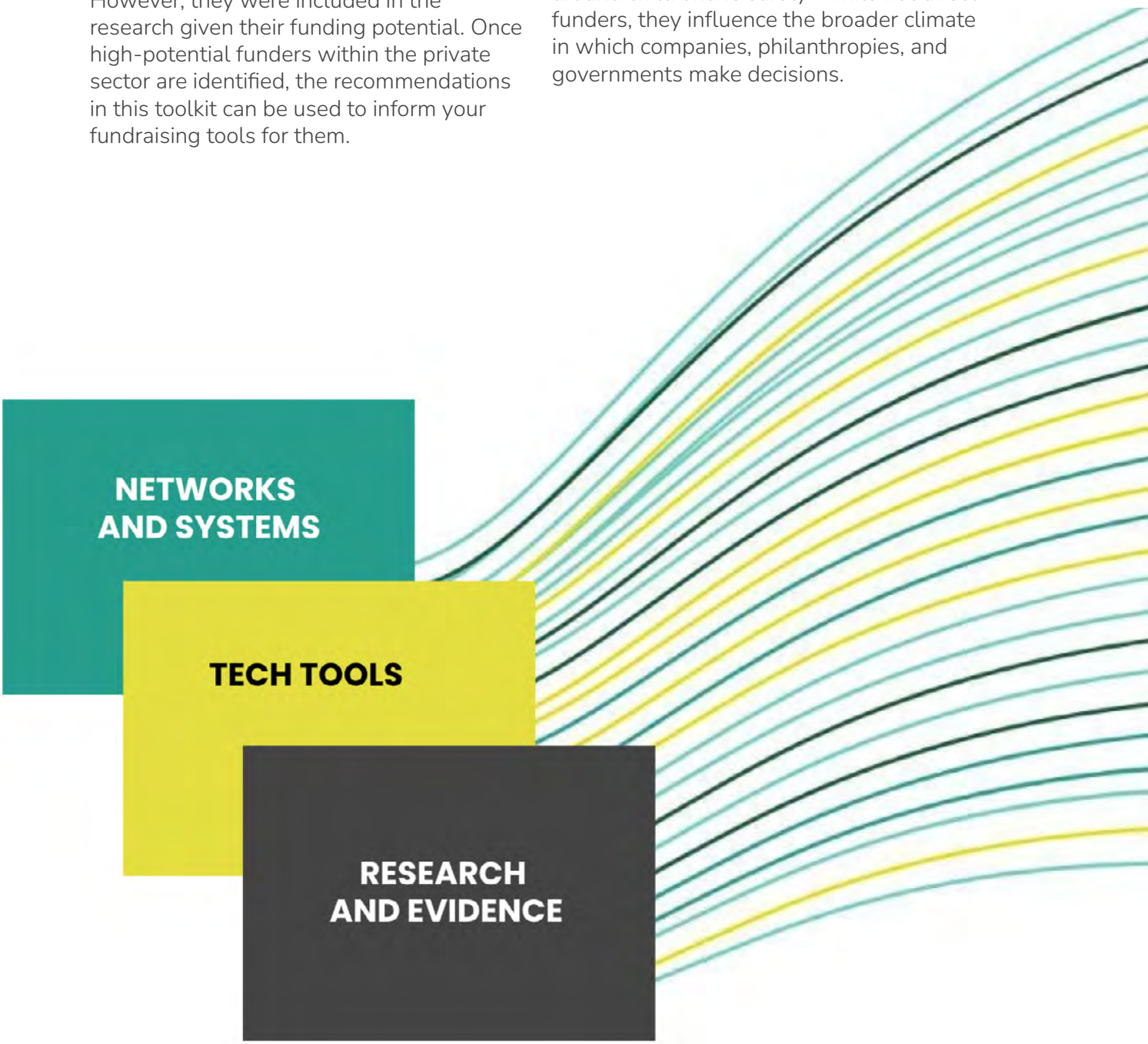
Non-tech corporations, financial institutions, and corporate foundations that may engage through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG), trust, reputation, or broader child wellbeing priorities. They are more likely to respond when child online safety is linked to trust, legitimacy, and the wider environments in which children and families live.

This group was not a primary audience, as it is highly diverse, with motivations that vary by geography, organisational focus, local regulation, and public pressure. However, they were included in the research given their funding potential. Once high-potential funders within the private sector are identified, the recommendations in this toolkit can be used to inform your fundraising tools for them.

Media & General Public (not included in the research for this narrative)

Media: Agenda setters that can shape public understanding of child online safety, increase salience, and influence how funders perceive the urgency and legitimacy of the issue. Media are important for moving the issue from episodic crisis coverage to a more structured and systemic public conversation.

General Public: Parents, caregivers, educators, and citizens who help shape the social norms and public expectations around child online safety. While not direct funders, they influence the broader climate in which companies, philanthropies, and governments make decisions.



3. Six Principles to Apply Across Your Financial Advocacy Tools

Across philanthropy, governments, tech, and the private sector, testing revealed that funders need emotional connection, perceived agency in the solution, and clear evidence of impact. These six narrative principles reflect the key cross-cutting insights across audience segments.

Principle 1. Frame the issue as urgent, but solvable

Research showed that catastrophic framing created overwhelm. Urgency resonated most strongly when framed around the pace of technology development, and the growing gap between innovation and protection. When funders see how coordinated investment can close that gap, urgency becomes motivating rather than paralysing.

Suggestion: Anchor the "why now" with the pace of change to show how coordinated investment can close the gap.

Principle 2. Reduce distance, make the issue feel personally relevant

Funders engage in child online safety when it feels relevant to their own communities and children. Family foundations, big tech, governments, and the private sector are most motivated to fund solutions that directly impact their local communities. Using framing that localises the impact of online risks helps reduce psychological distance and increase salience.

Suggestion: Connect global coordination to tangible local consequences and safety. Show how cross-border systems shape children's daily lives, including "our children."

Principle 3. Create agency, showing how capital can change the system

The dominant barrier is not awareness; it is being overwhelmed by a seemingly unsolvable issue. In testing, funders repeatedly asked what they could do to solve the issue. They need to see their role in a structured solution.

Suggestion: Make the funding gap visible and show how coordinated capital strengthens infrastructure, reduces duplication, and embeds safeguards. Show what changes because of a funder's investment, so they can see the contribution their capital makes.

Principle 4. Lead with human impact, then pivot to system infrastructure

Relatable, human-centred imagery and metaphors increased engagement and reduced psychological distance from the problem. However, institutional funders ultimately fund based on governance, evidence, and coordination. Systems framing is needed to secure commitment.

Suggestion: Open with tangible human stories to capture attention, then demonstrate how your organisation strengthens policies, institutions, and embedded safety systems. Emotion opens the door; structure secures the investment.

Principle 5. Demonstrate systemic impact and outcomes, not just activity or reach

Across philanthropy, government, and tech, there was a consistent demand for human impact outcomes and system-level evidence. Stakeholders wanted to understand what changed - laws, institutions, safeguards, capacity - not just how many people were reached ("It's not enough to speak of reach"). This builds credibility and strengthens your organisation's case as an investment vehicle.

Suggestion: Pair stories with data. Highlight measurable system strengthening. Avoid implying total elimination of harm.

Principle 6. Keep it concrete, clear, and credible

Abstract framing and overly technical language risk reducing engagement. Tech companies look for language that demonstrates your organisation's technical expertise, without jargon or unnecessarily complex language.

Suggestion: Use simple language and avoid implying perfect protection. Ground any claims in evidence.

Exercise

Review a communication piece your organisation has recently produced. Identify which of the six principles the piece applies, and which are missing.

Then consider: what is one specific change that would make this communication piece more effective towards a sceptical or fatigued audience?

4.Emotional Curve During Decision Making

The decision to fund is not a single moment; it unfolds in stages. What attracts attention is not what ultimately secures capital. Each stage requires different emotional and informational cues. Therefore, to attract funding you need to consider what funders need to hear and see at each stage of the journey. The emotional curve below describes the different stages funders go through during decision making.

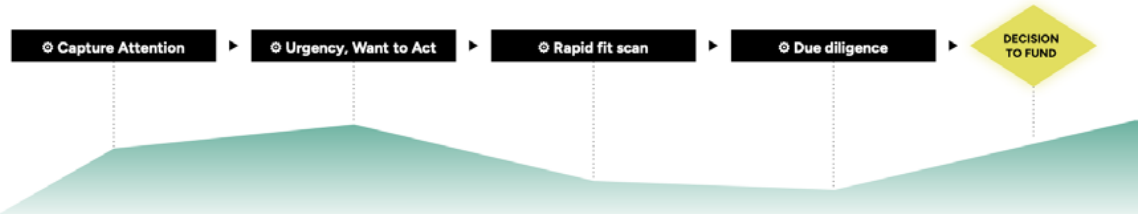


Figure 1: The funder emotional curve across the decision journey.

Stage 1. Capture Attention

Focus: Emotionally resonant, tangible, solvable, human

A potential funder must first become aware of the issue in a way that cuts through competing priorities. At this stage, the goal is not to overwhelm with complexity, but to make the problem clear, human, and tangible. Emotional salience and simplicity matter most, helping the issue feel real and relevant without triggering fatalism or defensiveness.

Stage 2. Urgency, Want to Act

Focus: Time, Pace, Consequences of inaction

Once attention is captured, messaging must quickly establish why this issue matters now. Funders assess whether it aligns with their mandate, values, or business priorities and whether it stands out among competing demands. A powerful sense of pace, consequence and relevance is critical here, ensuring the issue feels both important and time sensitive.

Stage 3. Rapid Fit Scan

Focus: Clear role for funder, strategic alignment, pathway to solutions

If the issue feels urgent, funders move quickly into a light-touch assessment. They ask whether there is a clear pathway to solutions, whether the organisation is credible, and whether their capital could make a meaningful difference. At this stage, high-level data, a clear theory of change and a defined role for the funder help convert interest into thoughtful consideration.

Stage 4. Due Diligence

Focus: Data, metrics, system-level impact

Funders evaluate impact evidence, scalability, credibility, and governance structures. They assess risk, return, and feasibility, and look for proof that the proposed investment will deliver measurable, system-level outcomes. Overpromising undermines confidence; credible data helps to build it.

Stage 5. Decision to Fund

Focus: Strategic fit, evidence, clear funder role

Investment decisions happen when emotional salience, strategic fit, credible evidence, and a clear role for the funder all align.

5.Five Narrative Components That Outline the Financial Narrative

To align with how funders make decisions, the financial narrative should be structured in five components, each designed to meet a different emotional and rational need along the funding journey. These five components form the strategic architecture for the funding messaging. They provide a repeatable structure for framing your messaging when speaking to potential funders.

While different audiences may enter the journey at various stages, a complete funding narrative should ultimately address all five components to move from awareness to commitment.

A. The Problem	B. Funding Rationale	C . Value Proposition	D. Evidence & Proof	F. Call to Action
How to frame the problem of keeping children safe online	Explanation of why funding is needed now, not later	Your organisation's unique role compared to other actors	Demonstration that your approach works and delivers measurable impact	A clear articulation of what funders can do, to motivate them to fund.

Table 1. Five narrative components summarised

Component A. The Problem

Generally, funders engage most when a problem feels concrete, human, and solvable. A local or personal lens helps turn an abstract issue into one they are more likely to care about and want to act on.

- **A dual-identity effect within every funder**: Behind every funding institution are individuals whose perspectives and emotions shape decision-making. The problem must resonate with them individually in their roles as parents and members of society, just as much as it resonates on an organisational level. Thus, human-centred perspectives focusing on what parents and children face have proven to be compelling levers in motivation to fund.
- **Two-step logic:** Lead with story, then prove with data. Start with a relatable human story that makes the issue tangible and urgent ("When 13-year-old Ana faced online extortion"). Then reinforce that emotional engagement with credible data that shows the scale and impact of the problem (e.g. "Ana's experience is a window into an often hidden crisis where one case of child online abuse is reported every second"). Both elements should be tailored to the funder's mandate and decision criteria (e.g. if speaking to a Ministry of Justice, choose data in terms of cases taken to court).

How to frame the problem for the three primary funder audiences

Philanthropy

For philanthropy, emotional connection often opens the door, but the message must quickly show a credible pathway to action.

- **Philanthropies are not homogenous, but they usually still need to emotionally connect with the issue**: Philanthropies differ in terms of their organisational structures, geographic

focus, and priorities. Large systemic philanthropies (e.g. Gates Foundation, CIFF) seek evidence of systemic change and impact over time. Meanwhile, family foundations and smaller philanthropies need either personal alignment with the issue or alignment with their organisational priorities.

If a philanthropy is unfamiliar with child online safety, they need to emotionally connect with the problem by seeing localised human impact. Many smaller philanthropies, and High Net-Worth Individuals (HNWIs), are mostly interested in funding impact within their local geographies. They are attracted to messaging and visuals that suggest the children could be their own, or from their communities.

- **Offer solution pathways:** Current problem framings tend to focus on fatalistic portrayals of children online. Philanthropy is motivated by solutions rather than fatalism. Problem statements should therefore signal a credible pathway to impact and avoid implying that the issue is either unsolvable or already fully addressed by others. Likewise, Philanthropy needs to feel their agency - what can they bring to the table that others cannot? Why is investment crucial?

- **Large philanthropy**: Large, established foundations are highly rational and require the problem to be framed around structural gaps, uncoordinated systems, and the need for scalable infrastructure.

- **Small, family, tech philanthropy**: They respond best to problem framing that anchors on lived experiences. Their primary identity as parents, grandparents, community members, is the entry point. The problem should feel local and close to home before it feels global. Only introduce structural context once emotional investment is established.

Tech Companies

Tech companies are already aware that this is an issue requiring a solution. They reject problem framings that suggest tech is to blame, or that highlight the problem in geographies they do not work in.

- **Tech stakeholders reject frames that place blame on their industry:** Tech stakeholders respond poorly to fatalistic narratives that position technology as the adversary. Framing technology as the fundamental enemy or relying on "doom and gloom" fatalism actively alienates the audience and is perceived as an oversimplification. It causes them to disengage and become defensive rather than leaning into a partnership. The problem framing should instead focus on how the issue persists despite technological advances aimed at addressing it, highlighting the need for coordinated action, including from tech.

- **Global frames can have counterproductive effects**: Framing child online safety as a global, cross-border problem, can miss the mark for many US-based tech companies. Corporate giving often ties their philanthropic strategies directly to their business footprint. A tech company may only want to give to causes affecting communities where it operates.

- **It is a user trust issue** : While technology companies are aware of regulatory changes and a need to meet new standards, framing the issue of child online safety as a threat to user trust is far more compelling than focusing on regulation.

- **Big Tech**: Frame the issue as a shared societal responsibility, requiring protection mechanisms to evolve alongside technological progress, and moving away from portraying the issue as solely a technology-sector problem. Emotional engagement is effective when centred on improving outcomes for children rather than on "fixing" technology itself.

Governments

Governments are motivated by concerns that their own citizens are at risk, and in issues their constituents care about.

- **The pace of technological change is a growing concern :** Media across the world has highlighted the pace of technology developments, in particular with AI, creating growing fears that tech evolution is happening faster than we can keep up with. Governments are conscious of this public narrative and fear around the pace of technological change, so framing the issue around this and the need for protection systems to keep up will help attract their attention. Especially for governments where digital adoption is rapidly growing without regulation in place.

- **Governments act on behalf of society:** Governments are motivated by the people they represent. They need to hear human stories that impact their wider system and government priorities (e.g. education, mental health). Critically, they are motivated by issues they believe their constituents are concerned by.

- **Leverage social norms and political signalling:** Decision-makers are influenced by what other governments and institutions are prioritising. Highlight where peer governments are already acting, and position engagement as part of a broader global movement.

- **High-income countries already funding or engaged**. Many high-income governments, such as France and the UK, are already aware of the prevalence of online risks for children with regulations and policies already in place. They require less convincing of the issue, and more focus on the Funding Rationale, conveying the urgency of why now.

- **Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs):** LMIC governments may not always recognise child online safety as a key issue impacting them, as there may be limited data around online abuse within their country. In data-poor environments, governments are motivated by data outlining the prevalence of the issue within their borders, or within similar contexts. They may not easily relate to an issue that feels remote and unfamiliar from them.

Component B. Funding Rationale

The Funding Rationale must transition the audience from merely caring about the problem to understanding why their capital is critically needed today, answering the question: “Why should this be funded now, not later?”

- **The cost of inaction is one of the strongest “why now” hooks:** Across government and multilateral interviews, the most persuasive rationale linked delayed action to growing long-term costs, whether in enforcement, mental health, social protection, education, or productivity. This framing is especially effective when grounded in the realities of the specific ministry or policy audience being addressed.

  While governments are motivated by the financial cost of inaction, philanthropies are motivated by the cost of inaction on wider philanthropic priorities- if they do not act now, what will the cost be on other development goals.

- **If we do not act now, other priorities will be affected :** Messaging portraying child online safety as no longer a niche issue, but one that impacts every dimension of childhood, and has wider societal impacts e.g. on workforce readiness, helps associate the urgency of protecting children online with the urgency of other development outcomes.

- **Urgency must be paired with scalable, ready-now solutions**: For all audiences, a strong rationale does not stop at describing future risks. It shows that proven, scalable interventions already exist and can be deployed now. This helps frame this current inflection moment as not only an urgent moment, but also a key moment of opportunity. That combination of urgency plus implementation readiness is what makes investment timely rather than merely aspirational.

How to frame the problem for the three primary funder audiences

Philanthropy

Philanthropy feels the need to prioritise child online safety when they see the impact not doing anything now will have on their other priorities.

- **What is the impact on other priorities**: Philanthropic funders are driven by the social outcomes they want to improve, not by the technical architecture behind them. The most effective urgency hook for this group is demonstrating how digital safety is no longer a niche issue, but rather the foundation that impacts all their other funding priorities (e.g., mental health, education, workforce readiness).

- **Philanthropy broadly**: Position child online safety as a cross-sector enabler. Show how child online safety underpins outcomes funders already prioritise. Lead with the societal problem being solved, then connect that to your organisation's ability to scale out proven solutions. Philanthropists of all sizes want their capital to have maximum leverage, and showing that the infrastructure is already built and ready to deploy is highly motivating.

Tech Companies

Tech Companies know they need to act now, but they feel urgency to fund now when they see an opportunity that they can help supercharge through their investment, generating efficiencies.

- **Results Focused and Efficiency Motivated**: Tech companies are aware of the pace of technological change; they are motivated to invest now in solutions with proven results. Efficiency arguments land well, for example, "this solution reaches ten times more children per dollar than traditional methods."

- **Tech broadly: seek to supercharge proven results**: Tech respondents strongly favoured the argument that the partners, tools, and evidence-based approaches needed to deploy proven solutions quickly already exist. The tech sector is inundated with pitches from organisations seeking support. Highlight your organisation as a capable, results-driven partner that simply needs to be supercharged - with Big Tech's resources providing the catalyst.

- **Tech broadly: value understanding the cost of inaction**: The "Cost of Inaction" can also motivate technology companies to fund now if framed around reputational risk and impact on user trust. Tech stakeholders need to pitch for funding to organisational decision makers, and "the cost of doing nothing" makes an effective internal business case.

Governments

Governments are motivated to act now when they understand the cost (both financial and developmental) on their systems and societies.

- **Balanced Economic Rationales:** The funding rationale cannot simply add another crisis to a government plate; it must present a calculated, immediate solution that actively reduces their long-term burden. To land effectively,

the “Why Now?” argument should be tailored to each government audience, anchoring urgency in the economic realities and cost savings most relevant to their specific mandates.

- **Governments broadly value the cost of inaction tailored to relevant sectors:** Framing urgency around the fact that the costs of inaction grow every year (whether in enforcement, mental health, or lost productivity) speaks directly to the “why now?” question. Tailor the data to your audience, leading with the cost implications that resonate most with the specific government ministry priorities you are speaking to.

- **Multilateral organisations**: Value solutions that can be scaled now. Emphasise proven, scalable solutions; this is what makes the investment timely. Any data presented must be current and demonstrate both readiness to scale and proof of concept.

Component C. Value Proposition

Clearly articulating your organisation’s unique value is essential to showing funders why it is a credible, high leverage investment vehicle in child online safety.

- **Bridging Donor Gaps**: Your value proposition should be tailored to the specific operational or knowledge gaps of the funding organisation.

How to frame the problem for the three primary funder audiences

Philanthropy

Philanthropies need to have confidence that their investments lead to systemic change. Philanthropic funders are looking for confidence that their capital will back up real solutions, generate structural outcomes, and go further than a single grant could on its own.

They need to know that you have evidence of what works, and proof of scalable solutions with widespread systemic impact.

- **Large Philanthropy:** Large foundations respond best when the organisation can turn local breakthroughs into structural, system level change across countries and institutions. Highlight your organisation’s ability to influence structural shifts, advancing child wellbeing across sectors, strengthening national systems, and turning localised pilots into global impact.

- **Small family and High-Net-Worth Foundations**: For leaner funders and HNW donors, the strongest value proposition is that your organisation multiplies impact by identifying and managing interventions at the local level through your existing network and partnerships.

Tech Companies

Tech Companies value organisations that can be an expert partner with understanding of child safety systems, who can act as a collaborator to co-develop scalable solutions.

- **Tech companies seek a partner to collaborate with:** Tech stakeholders are least interested in passive, vendor style pitches and most interested in you as a practical collaborator that helps them make better decisions, build trust, and strengthen safety systems in a fast-changing environment.

- **A credible, good-faith partner on tough questions:** Tech companies value your organisation’s willingness to engage transparently and in good faith on the most contested issues in child online safety, even where there are differences of opinion or approach.

Governments

Governments value implementable and scalable solutions that have been proven

to work. They want to know how you will advise them and on which solutions to scale.

- **A need for evidence of what works and a strategic partner:** Because governments are overwhelmed by competing priorities and time-poor, your organisation is most compelling when positioned not simply as a pooled fund, but as a strategic partner that helps decision makers navigate competing priorities, identify scalable responses, and strengthen national systems in a rapidly evolving digital environment. Governments need to understand what the most cost-effective and proven solutions are.

- **Donor Governments/Multilaterals**: This audience values organisations that can translate funding into system level impact across multiple countries and contexts. They are interested in scalable, evidence-based interventions and coordination that reaches where they cannot directly operate.

- **Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs):** LMICs audiences respond to locally relevant data, practical entry points, and sector specific outcomes. They want to know how this helps them act within their own systems and constraints.

- **Showcase sector-specific outcomes**: Position your organisation as a strategic partner capable of strengthening national child protection systems across sectors, by helping ministries modernise their justice, law enforcement, education, and other related sectors responses to digital harm.

Component D. Evidence & Proof

Funders seek evidence that their investment will lead to meaningful, systemic, and scalable outcomes. However, the type of proof that makes the strongest case for funding varies significantly depending on the audience's organisational priorities.

- **The 1-2 punch for heart-led decisions:** For most decision-makers, especially in Philanthropy and certain sub-segments of tech, evidence must follow a specific "1-2 punch" sequence: hook the audience emotionally with a human survivor story (the heart), then immediately validate their investment with hard data that proves system-scale impact (the head).

- **Value of contextualising data**: Across all sectors, quantitative data must be anchored in a qualitative context. "Empty" numbers fall flat; for example, citing the number of technological innovations deployed has little relevance unless accompanied by the "so what?"

How to frame the problem for the three primary funder audiences

Philanthropy

- **Answer the "so what?" question**: Philanthropic organisations are overwhelmed with competing priorities and data from different projects. They want to understand the implications and longer-term systemic impact of any human impact story or scale data. Answering the 'so what' question can help explain why the human story is representative and worthy of attention.

- **Large philanthropy**: Large, globally focused philanthropies are highly interested in systems' impact data, evidence of scalability, and widespread child wellbeing metrics. They also value seeing geographic scope, such as global impact maps that prove the issue knows no borders and strongly prefer longitudinal data that demonstrates how structural issues have shifted and improved over time, rather than just isolated metrics captured at a single point in time.

- **Small, family, tech philanthropy:** It is crucial to use clear, jargon-free examples to demystify the data. Because these funders often do not know what big, technical terms like "regulatory frameworks" mean in practice, evidence should include a concrete country example explaining the specific problem and the actionable steps taken to fix it. Furthermore, because these donors are often driven by their visceral instincts as parents, the data must always be anchored by a highly relatable human story before introducing large-scale statistics.

Tech Companies

- **The tech sector's preference for evidence:** It depends heavily on the stakeholder's specific internal role (e.g., engineers versus product managers versus corporate leadership). However, to justify corporate spending, they typically lean towards user stories, clear use cases, and potential for scale.

- **Large tech companies:** Internal engineering teams highly value statistics related to tested and deployed innovations (e.g., "37 safety technologies tested") because this data directly helps them do their jobs. They prioritise quantifiable, black-and-white metrics that can be tracked over time.

For product-focused stakeholders, high-level strategy decks and generalised data are less helpful. They prefer concrete "case studies" and detailed "user stories." They want to see actual testimonies from users to prove exactly how a specific intervention functions in practice.

Corporate decision makers still respond to human impact. The most effective approach is the "1-2 punch." Provide evidence that proves maximum "bang for the buck" as investments are viewed as business decisions.

- **Avoid pitching policy changes or new laws**: Passing laws that regulate corporations is the "antithesis" of what a tech company's internal teams are trying to achieve, making it a poor metric for this specific sector.

- **Mid-sized tech companies :** Because they do not have the internal legal and engineering teams of Big Tech, they are looking for practical, plug-and-play solutions and concrete business justifications.

Evidence: mid-sized companies need evidence showing exactly how enterprise integration works. They respond best to highly tailored, granular "user stories" to prove exactly how the tool functions in a real-world scenario.

Compliance and certification proof: Evidence should highlight how tools help them achieve tech certifications or industry standards, proving that the investment directly mitigates their compliance risk.

Cost-effectiveness: Any quantitative evidence provided must serve a clear business case to justify corporate spending.

Governments

- **Hard, locally relevant, data over human stories:** Governments and multilateral institutions generally require hard data that demonstrates reach, impact, sector-specific outcomes, and statistics that build confidence in the cost-effectiveness of funded solutions. Because these actors govern on behalf of society, they require less of an emotional hook than philanthropic donors; they need a strong, data-driven case to justify sound public investment.

- **The economic layer: the cost of inaction:** To make the argument truly compelling, evidence should be woven into the economic reality of the "cost of inaction." Highlighting that every year of delay drives up future societal, health, and financial costs is one of the most effective ways to generate urgency among government

and multilateral stakeholders. *Crucial Nuance:* Use this framing thoughtfully. While it is highly successful for driving policy in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) and Multilaterals, some European diplomats react poorly to it, viewing "if you do not fund this, things will get worse" as an aggressive, guilt-inducing hook.

- **Navigate internal mandates**:The data selected to portray the issue must be tailored precisely to the sectoral interest of the specific ministry being pitched.

Diplomats / Foreign Affairs: Want global impact maps and evidence of cross-border policy alignment.

Ministry of Health: Wants comprehensive child wellbeing metrics and mental health data.

Ministry of Interior: Wants to see the number of law enforcement trained, and cost-benefit analyses.

- **High Income Governments/ Multilaterals:** For well-resourced nations and multilateral institutions (like the World Bank), investment decisions hinge on a scale. They want to see "big solutions at large scale," favouring system-scale prototypes (e.g., "86 countries strengthened legal frameworks") and global metrics that prove widespread effectiveness and cost-efficiency.

- **Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs)**: Prevalence Data is Key: To justify prioritising this issue over other constant national emergencies, local policymakers need localised prevalence data to understand exactly how many of their own children are impacted.

Actionable Results: They favour data that reflects concrete, actionable results rather than just abstract reports. For example, visual infographics detailing the exact percentage of "perpetrators identified" or "law enforcement units established" are highly compelling because they prove the system is actively working.

Component E. Call to Action

Funders invest where they can clearly see the impact their support will make. A strong call to action should therefore make the next step clear, concrete, and compelling, showing funders exactly what their investment will enable and the difference it can create.

Make it clear what funders can do to help advance child online safety
The call to action should translate the value proposition into a specific, credible opportunity for engagement, giving each funder audience a clear sense of the role they can play and why action is needed now.

Do not end with a general appeal for support
The narrative should articulate the concrete contribution being sought, whether that is providing flexible capital, supporting the scale-up of proven solutions, contributing expertise or technology, influencing systems and policy, or forming strategic partnerships.

The strongest calls to action are tailored to the funder's motivations and capacity
Close every pitch with a specific, achievable, and time-bound ask. Name the amount, the mechanism, and the period, and connect it explicitly back to the outcome described in the value proposition.

How to frame the problem for the three primary funder audiences

Philanthropy

Philanthropic funders should be motivated to use their capital to accelerate and scale solutions that can deliver systemic change. The call to action should make clear where philanthropic funding can fill critical gaps,

de-risk innovation, support evidence generation, and enable proven approaches to move from local success to broader systems-level impact.

- **Large philanthropy:** Invite large foundations to make catalytic investments that can unlock change beyond an individual programme or grant. The call to action should focus on opportunities to fund scale, strengthen systems, influence institutions, and demonstrate what is possible across countries and contexts.

- **Small Family and High-Net-Worth (HNW) Philanthropy:** Invite smaller foundations and HNW donors to provide flexible, targeted support where it can make a disproportionate difference. Emphasise opportunities to back locally led solutions, respond quickly to emerging needs, and use their funding to test, strengthen, or scale high-potential interventions through trusted networks and partnerships.

Tech Companies

Tech companies should be motivated to move from being supporters of child online safety to active partners in shaping and implementing solutions. The call to action should identify tangible ways they can contribute through technology, expertise, data, product development, research, convening power, and financial investment, while demonstrating how collaboration can strengthen safety systems and build trust.

- **A practical invitation to collaborate:** Invite technology companies to co-develop, test, and scale solutions alongside your organisation, rather than simply asking them to fund existing work. Make the opportunity concrete by identifying the problems where their technology, expertise, or capabilities can have the greatest impact.

- **A credible partner on difficult challenges:** Create opportunities for tech companies to engage on complex and contested issues where independent expertise, evidence, and good-faith collaboration are particularly valuable. The call to action should position partnership as an opportunity to help shape better approaches to child safety while responding constructively to emerging risks.

Governments

Governments should be motivated to translate evidence and proven approaches into action within their own systems. The call to action should make clear what decision makers can do, whether that means adopting proven interventions, investing in national systems, strengthening policy and regulation, commissioning evidence, or partnering to test and scale solutions.

- **Donor Governments/Multilaterals**: Invite donor governments and multilaterals to use their funding and convening power to accelerate system-level change across countries and contexts. The call to action should focus on opportunities to finance scalable solutions, strengthen coordination, support evidence-based approaches, and extend impact into contexts where they cannot directly operate.

- **Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs):** Invite governments to identify practical entry points for action within their existing systems and constraints. The call to action should be grounded in locally relevant evidence and demonstrate how governments can adopt, adapt, finance, and scale solutions that are feasible, cost-effective, and responsive to their specific national priorities.

6. How The Narrative Might Be Adjusted for Secondary Audiences

General Public

Offer nuance - Parents are highly motivated but often misunderstand the nature of the threat. The narrative must help shift the public understanding from simply “screen time” to the systemic reality of digital threats.

Leverage existing momentum - Grassroots movements led by parents are changing the landscape, and this can be leveraged and displayed in the narrative approach. Experts noted that child online safety is becoming an electoral issue, driven by survivors’ parents and by grassroots movements advocating for a smartphone-free childhood.

Private Sector

Make the business case - For the broader private sector, child online safety is viewed through the lens of brand reputation, risk mitigation, and customer trust. Corporate stakeholders are highly motivated by the bottom line.

Offer a human story - While the goal is business value, pitching to corporate boards still requires a human hook. The narrative should appeal to human instincts before offering business justifications.

Media

Explain the structures behind human stories - Currently, media coverage is highly episodic, reactive, and driven by high-profile tragedies which creates an alarming and fatalistic tone. The narrative must help the media shift from crisis reporting to highlighting systemic gaps and a need for funding solutions.

Exercise

Take a funding pitch or case for support your organisation has recently used. Identify which audience it targets and check it against all five narrative components above. Is any stage missing, out of order, or generic rather than audience-specific? Rewrite the stages using the guidance above.

7. Creative Tips to Frame Your Narrative

This section is all about how we translate the research findings and narrative strategy into creative concepts that support fundraising efforts and motivate donors to act.

Creative execution can play a critical role in translating the fundraising narrative into something that is not only understood but felt and acted upon. It is not about developing standalone campaign ideas or abstract concepts, but about ensuring that every expression of the narrative - visuals, language, structure - works to reduce friction between understanding and action.

In this context, creative execution serves three functions:

- Make the problem legible: turning a complex, systemic issue into something concrete, immediate, and relatable
- Make your organisation's role and the solutions it represents motivating, showing how coordinated investment leads to real, systemic change
- Make the role of the funder clear: demonstrating how capital translates into outcomes

Let us look at the creative tips below and explore what they mean for creative execution.

Frame the issue as urgent, but solvable

Creative Implication: Creative execution of the narrative should communicate that the problem is serious and accelerating, while reinforcing that progress is possible through coordinated investment.

Consider

- Emphasising the gap between safeguards and the pace of change
- Pairing risk with visible solutions or progress
- Never present a risk without showing a route to a solution
- Even if using tension or humour to capture attention, resolution pathways should quickly follow

Avoid

- Overwhelming or fear-heavy imagery that creates paralysis
- Presenting the issue as too large or complex to address
- Highlighting problems without showing what is working
- Language or visuals that imply inevitability or loss of control

Reduce distance, make the issue feel personally relevant

Creative Implication: Creative execution of the narrative should make a global, systemic issue feel immediate and close to home, reducing psychological distance.

Consider:

- Using "your" and "our" framing rather than distant population groups. Research showed that funders engage with child online safety first as parents and individuals, and only then as donors
- Grounding the issue in everyday environments (home, school, community)
- Leaning into recognizable human contexts rather than abstract systems
- Linking global dynamics to local consequences

Avoid:

- Abstract or overly symbolic visuals or references that require interpretation
- Purely technical representations of the issue
- Global messaging that does not include a human "anchor"

- Starting with policy or infrastructure framing

Create agency, showing how capital translates to system change

Creative Implication: The narrative should make it clear how funding translates into system change, and what role the funder plays within that. Help donors see themselves in the solutions offered.

Consider:

- Contrasting "with funding" and "without funding" scenarios to show the consequences of inaction
- Make the pathway from donor funding to outcome more explicit. Funder + your organisation= Specific Results
- Using active, constructive metaphors like building, connecting, reinforcing

Avoid:

- Vague references to "impact" without showing what changed and how it was achieved
- Leaving the role of funding implicit or unclear
- Passive or reactive metaphors (e.g. rescue, catching, protection after harm)
- Fragmented storytelling that does not mention system-level change

Lead with human impact, then pivot to system infrastructure

Creative Implication: The narrative should engage audiences emotionally first, then build credibility through systems, evidence, and structure. Both are needed.

Consider:

- Opening with a human moment or point of view
- Pair stories with data and relevant proof points
- Structuring content to move from individual to system to solution

Avoid:

- Leading with policy or institutional language
- Emotional storytelling with no connection to systemic change
- Focusing too much on emotion or evidence alone

Demonstrate systemic impact and outcomes, not just activity or reach

Creative Implication: Show what has changed, not just activities.

Consider:

- Highlighting system-level results (policy, infrastructure, capacity)
- Showing progress over time or directional improvement
- Connecting outcomes directly to investment and coordination

Avoid:

- Vague or generic claims of "impact" (e.g. "Helping keep children safe")
- Overclaiming or implying total elimination of harm
- Data without context or relevance to decision-making

Keep it concrete, clear, and credible

Creative Implication: Build trust through clarity. Creative should be immediately understandable, grounded in reality, and easy to act on.

Consider:

- Using simple, direct language with minimal jargon
- Ensuring concepts are instantly legible without explanation
- Aligning imagery, tone, and messaging to avoid dissonance
- Including clear, actionable pathways to funding or engagement

Avoid:

- Busy or cluttered layouts with competing messages
- Overly technical or abstract language
- Generic "development terminology"
- Misaligned tone (e.g. upbeat visuals with serious statistics)
- Calls to action that stop at awareness rather than funding action

8. A Few Other Words of Caution

When developing narratives about financing for child online safety, it is important to consider not only what the story communicates, but also how the people, situations, and emotions within it are represented. The choices made around visual imagery, and the use of threat or fear can significantly shape how audiences understand the issue and whether they feel informed, concerned, and empowered to respond. The following considerations highlight some potential aspects to be mindful of when developing narratives.

Avoid over-simplistic representations

Avoid visuals that reduce online harm to only one perpetrator-and-victim narrative. Imagery that is only built around strangers can actively misrepresent the issue.

Potential and pitfalls of fear-based imagery

Fear-based imagery produced mixed responses. For some, it was effective, creating a sense of urgency that prompted engagement and a desire to act. For others, imagery that leaned too heavily into threat and danger, felt overwhelming rather than motivating, risking disengagement.

Creative Concepts must stand on their own

Many respondents struggled to connect abstract concepts to the issue of online safety, finding the link unclear or requiring too much interpretation. The feedback was consistent: a strong creative concept should be immediately legible without the need for explanation.

Emphasise agency and action-oriented creatives

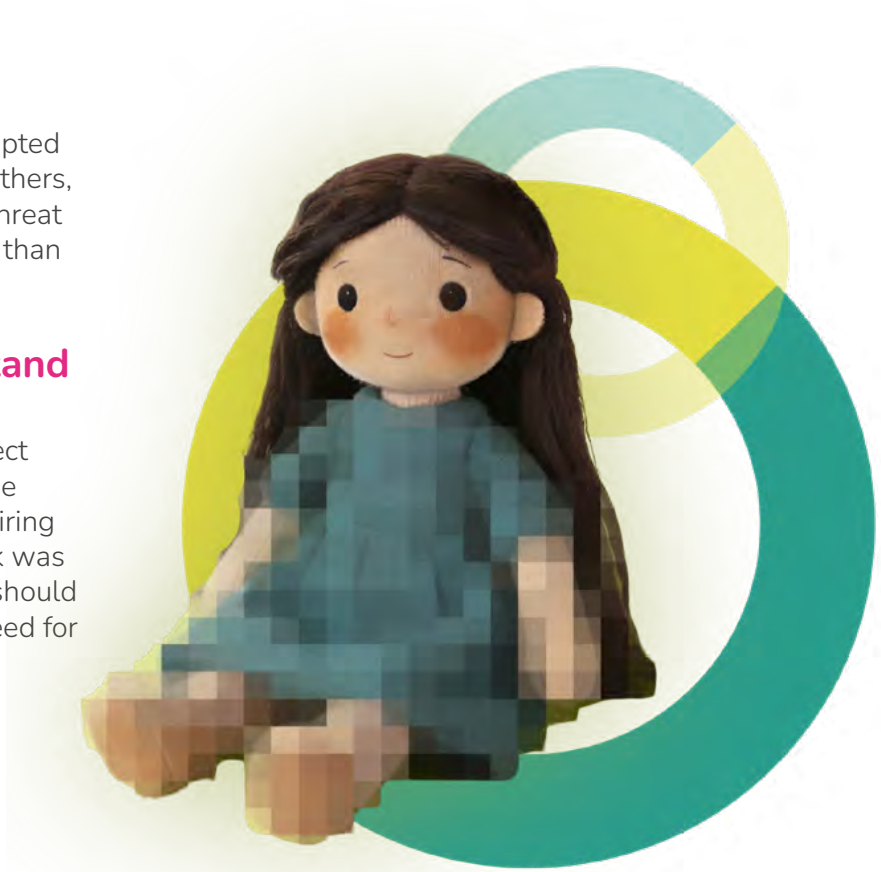
Funders respond most positively to concepts where they can see a role for themselves. Instead of passive protection (e.g. a net catching someone), they want to see an active role, e.g. weaving, building, that they can play.

9. Message Matrices

These matrices tie the funding decision journey together for each primary audience: the key messaging anchors to lead with, terms to avoid, and adaptable example messages for each stage.

Philanthropy

Core motivation: Fund catalytic investments that either personally resonate or align with organisational priorities, enabling systemic protection for children and broader child wellbeing outcomes.



Journey Stage	Key Message Framing	Relevant for	Example Messages
The Problem	Human impact first, then the systems gap	High Net-Worth Individuals (HNWIs), family foundations	*"Children are going online younger and more independently than ever, navigating a digital world built by adults, for adults. The threats are evolving, but our protection systems haven't kept up, and families are left to carry the risk alone."*
The Problem	Pace of technology as a solvable coordination gap	All philanthropy	*"Technology is developing faster than our protection systems can adapt. But this is not an unstoppable train; it is a solvable gap. We have the tools to catch up; we just need the coordination and capital to deploy them."*
Value Proposition	Turning local breakthroughs into structural change	Large philanthropy	*"We work where single grants cannot reach: converting proven local interventions into national systems, across countries and institutions. Your investment buys structural change, not a pilot."*
	Intermediary that finds, vets, and manages	Small and family foundations, HNWIs	*"You do not need to build a grant-making team for this. We identify, assess, and support the strongest interventions through networks we already hold, so your funding reaches the front line without the overhead."*
Funding Rationale	Cross-sector impact on other funding priorities	All philanthropy	*"Digital safety is no longer a niche issue: it shapes mental health, education, and social cohesion. Investing now protects every dimension of childhood."*
Funding Rationale	Position as a cross-sector enabler with proven scale	All philanthropy	*"The infrastructure is already built and ready to deploy. Your capital gives it maximum leverage."*
Evidence & Proof	The 1-2 punch: survivor story, then systemic scale	All philanthropy	*"When a 13-year-old faced online extortion, she found support through a local hotline. We scaled that lifeline across [xx] countries."*
Evidence & Proof	Longitudinal, system-level outcomes	Large philanthropy	*"We measure outcomes over time, not just initial reach. In [xx] countries, we have strengthened legal and regulatory frameworks, ensuring that child online protection is permanently embedded into national systems."*
Call to Action	Catalytic investment that unlocks change beyond one grant	Large philanthropy	*"We are seeking [amount] over [period] to scale [specific intervention] into [number] national systems. Your commitment would unlock [named co-funding or policy outcome] by [date]."*
	Flexible, targeted support where it moves fastest	Small and family foundations, HNWIs	*"[Amount] would fund [specific locally led intervention] in [place] for [period], enough to [concrete outcome]. We would report back to you on [specific measure] within [time]."*

Key words: leverage, systems change, credibility, agency.

Key terms to avoid: crisis-only or fatalistic framing, implying philanthropy alone must solve the problem, and heavy governance jargon early on.

Exercise

Take one existing communication your organisation has sent to a philanthropic funder: an appeal, an update, or a case for support.

- Identify which of the five components it contains, and which are missing.
- Highlight every phrase that relies on alarm, urgency, or guilt.
- Rewrite it by using the framings above.
- Count how many phrases you changed. This gives you a rough indicator of how far your current donor communications rely on fear-based framing.

Tech Companies

Core motivation: strengthen safety across digital ecosystems while maintaining user trust and staying ahead of regulatory expectations.

Journey Stage	Key Message Framing	Relevant for	Example Messages
The Problem	Children in environments built for adults	Leadership, product teams	*"Children are navigating digital environments originally designed for adults."*
The Problem	Safety systems evolving alongside technology	All tech	*"Technology is evolving rapidly, and the systems that protect children must evolve with it."*
Funding Rationale	Rising trust and regulatory expectations	Leadership, trust & safety	*"Safer digital environments are no longer optional: they are part of what users, regulators, and society increasingly expect."*
Funding Rationale	Shared responsibility, no single company can solve it alone	All tech	*"No company can solve child online safety alone. Addressing this requires shared solutions across platforms, governments, and civil society."*
Value Proposition	Practical collaborator, not a vendor	All tech	*"We are not asking you to fund a programme and receive a report. We work alongside your teams to test, refine, and deploy safety solutions, and we share what we learn across the ecosystem."*
	Good-faith partner on contested questions	Leadership, policy teams	*"We engage transparently on the hardest questions in child online safety, including where we disagree. That is what makes us useful to you."*
Evidence & Proof	Concrete case studies and ecosystem outcomes	All tech	*"Our interventions have been tested at scale, and our learnings have been shared across the ecosystem."*
Call to Action	A practical invitation to co-develop	Leadership, policy teams	*"We are convening [named forum or workstream] on [contested issue] in [timeframe]. We would like your team at the table."*
	Brings a proven model	Corporate decision-makers	*"The partners, tools, and evidence base already exist. [Amount] or [in-kind contribution] would let us deploy them at [scale] by [date]."*

Key words: collaboration, ecosystem responsibility, trust and legitimacy, innovation.
Key terms to avoid: presenting technology as the problem, suggesting tech is failing to keep up rather than evolving, and claims of “complete” protection.

Exercise

Identify one tech company in your country or region that is influential, well-resourced, and not currently engaged in child online safety programmes. Using the reframing categories above, write a 90-second pitch (approximately 150 words) that connects child online safety to one of their stated business priorities.

Governments

Core motivation: strengthen national and cross-border systems to protect children online, reduce future social and economic costs, and invest in scalable solutions that can be implemented now.

Journey Stage	Key Message Framing	Relevant for	Example Messages
The Problem	People at risk first, then systems language	All governments	*"For today's children, the digital world is no longer separate from everyday life, and the risks are increasingly real."*
Funding Rationale	The cost of inaction, tailored to ministry	All governments	*"Every year of inaction drives up short- and long-term costs in enforcement, healthcare, and economic loss."*
Funding Rationale	Scalable solutions ready now	Donor governments, multilaterals	*"Proven solutions already exist. The priority now is to scale and implement them where they are most needed."*
Funding Rationale	Digital harm as a core governance challenge	All governments	*"As more of children's lives move online, child protection systems must adapt to a new arena of risk."*
Value Proposition	Practical entry points within existing constraints	LMIC governments	*"This works within your existing systems and budget. Here is the first step and what it costs."*
	Sector-specific system strengthening	Specific ministries	*"We help ministries modernise responses to digital harm across justice, law enforcement, education, and related sectors."*
Evidence & Proof	System-scale, sector-relevant evidence	Specific ministries	*For education audiences, show effects on attendance and learning; for justice/interior, show case handling and enforcement readiness.*
Evidence & Proof	Local prevalence and implementation relevance	Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) Governments	*Show how many children are affected locally, and what interventions have already improved response capacity.*
Call to Action	Finance and convene system-level change	Donor governments, multilaterals	*"We are seeking [amount] over [period] to scale [intervention] across [number] countries, and your convening power to bring [named partners] into alignment by [date]."*
	Commission evidence or partner on testing	All governments	*"Commission us to establish the prevalence baseline for [country], the data you need before you can prioritise this against competing demands."*

Key words: cost of inaction, scalable and ready-now solutions, sector-specific relevance, and peer-government momentum.
Key terms to avoid: purely emotional appeals without data, and a single global framing that does not connect to the specific ministry or country context.

Exercise

Using the reframing categories above, write a two-paragraph text (approximately 300 words) that advocates for child online safety to be a key government funding priority.

10. Measuring Effectiveness

The success of the narrative is not measured by reach alone. It is measured by whether it moves target audiences forward in the funding decision journey - from awareness to engagement to investment.

How to use this section

- Select a small number of indicators per stage rather than tracking everything, focus on measures that are actionable.
- Establish a baseline for engagement and conversion where possible, documenting any assumptions where data are incomplete.
- Track progression over time rather than one-off snapshots, so trends (not just totals) are visible.
- Define an appropriate conversion period for each stage and apply it consistently. Timelines may differ by type of funder.
- Disaggregate results by funder type (philanthropy, tech, government) given how differently these audiences move through the journey.
- Use the learning questions after key engagements, even briefly, and feed findings back into how the narrative and materials are adapted.

This section tracks three types of measure at each stage:
Engagement signals: early indications that a funder is paying attention or responding.

Conversion indicators: the proportion of funders moving from one stage to the next, which shows whether engagement is translating into progression.

Learning questions: brief qualitative prompts to understand why progression is or is not happening and what should be adapted in the narrative, evidence, or engagement approach.

Capture Attention: Awareness of the issue

Goal: Funders recognise child online safety as a credible and urgent investment area.

Engagement signals:

- Mentions by influential philanthropic or policy leaders
- Shares of narrative content by priority target audiences
- New inbound inquiries from funders or partners

Conversion indicator: Proportion of priority funders directly reached or engaged who take any follow-up action (share/inquire) within a defined period
Learning question: Which messages or framings prompted funders to engage further, and which were less engaging?

Urgency/Want to Act: Engagement with your organisation

Goal: Funders see your organisation as a credible actor and want to learn more.

Engagement signals:

- Requests for meetings or briefings
- Invitations to speak at donor forums or advisory boards
- Follow-up questions after presentations
- Downloads or requests for reports, toolkits, or investment materials by priority funders

Conversion indicator: Proportion of priority funders who engaged with the narrative and progress to an initial meeting or briefing

Learning question: What made the issue feel urgent (or not) to this funder, and what evidence or framing did they ask for?

Rapid Fit Scan: Initial evaluation

Goal: Funders assess whether your organisation's work fits their priorities and is worth deeper diligence.

Engagement signals:
- Requests for concept notes or short proposals
- Requests for basic organisational or programmatic information
- Follow-up questions on strategic fit

Conversion indicator: Proportion of funders completing an initial meeting/ briefing who request a concept note or progress to deeper assessment

Learning question: What strengthened or weakened strategic fit at this stage, and what concerns or gaps came up most often?

Due Diligence: In-depth evaluation

Goal: Funders evaluate your organisation as a credible, fundable investment partner.

Engagement signals:
- Invitations to present to investment committees
- Requests for deeper evidence, budgets, or impact data
- Follow-up meetings with senior leadership

Conversion indicator: Proportion of funders at the fit-scan stage who proceed to a full proposal request or committee review

Learning question: What evidence or reassurance was most important to decision-makers, where were the gaps, and what barriers slowed progression?

Decision to Fund: Funding and partnership outcomes

Goal: The narrative contributes to new funding commitments or partnerships.

Outcome indicators:
- New grants or multi-year commitments
- Value and duration of funding
- Corporate partnership agreements
- Inclusion in government or multilateral funding strategies
- Repeat investments from existing donors

Conversion indicator: Proportion of funders reaching due diligence who convert to a funding or formal partnership commitment

Learning question: What factors appeared to contribute most to successful funding or partnership decisions? For funders who declined or paused at this stage, what were the main reasons, and which of these could reasonably be addressed through the narrative or engagement approach?



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