“Narrative strategy to mobilise government, philanthropic and corporate funding for child online safety”

This document is meant to support shaping pitch decks, donor meetings, proposals and partnership outreach aimed at helping funders understand the value of supporting online safety.

Safe Online

Child Online Safety is critical infrastructure

Without it, every system pays more

2026 CRAFTED BY COMMON THREAD

This financial narrative framework is designed to help increase attention and funding for child online safety, by guiding the development of fundraising materials, partnerships and communications.



A funding crisis is exacerbating the child online safety crisis

Child Online Safety is trapped in a cycle of reactive funding

Despite public pressure and the escalating pace of technological change, Child Online Safety remains critically underfunded and highly fragmented. Currently, the issue appears episodically rather than systematically. As a result the field is widely perceived by donors as a reactive, crisis-driven space. It typically only gains attention after high-profile abuse cases or technology failures.

As the issue is often framed as an uncontrollable threat, funders have a fatalistic sense that the issue is unsolvable. Without a clear pathway of solutions, potential funders can feel psychological overwhelm and disengage with the issue, prioritising other urgent, but solvable, issues first.

Unlike health or climate, Child Online Safety lacks mature financing architecture and a unifying investment story. Without this, capital remains siloed in short-term investments, rather than long-term systemic solutions.

This presents both a challenge and a rare opportunity: to shape a compelling funding narrative that mobilises capital at scale.

This narrative requires a stronger story: one that shows progress is possible, highlights credible solutions, and demonstrates how donors can make a tangible difference. It's a story uniquely positioned to help shape and deliver: connecting funders with proven approaches, strategic investments, and a coordinated global effort to keep children safe online.

Why the Financial Narrative Matters Now



We are at an inflection point.

Globally, regulatory momentum is accelerating and technology firms are facing increasing public scrutiny for not adequately protecting children online. **The challenge is no longer awareness, but whether funders prioritise and feel they can act on the issue.**

Evidence shows that coordinated, cross-sector interventions spanning policy reform, technological safeguards, prevention, and response, can significantly reduce harm. In dozens of countries, protection systems have already been strengthened, with legal reforms advanced, reporting mechanisms expanded, and specialised investigative units established. Targeted investment works.

While a narrative cannot solve all issues, it can help to ensure messages are targeted, evidence-based and strategically aligned with key motivations and moments that matter to funders.

Crafting a funding narrative that integrates emotional resonance with credible data, and that adapts to sectoral priorities, is therefore **not a communications exercise; it is a strategic lever.** It transforms child online safety from an isolated digital concern into a high-impact, cross-sector investment case.

The moment demands more than awareness. **It requires a story that turns concern into confidence and confidence into funding.**

How to use this narrative

When to use it

Use this narrative whenever trying to secure funding, shape a financial case, or explain why coordinated investment in child online safety matters now. This includes pitch decks, donor meetings, proposals, partnership outreach, thought leadership, and public advocacy materials.

For each audience type, consider the format or tools for messaging, then use this narrative as a guide to inform how to develop your financial advocacy materials.

How to use it

1. Identify the audience and likely motivation.
2. Consider where they are in the funding decision journey.
3. Build the message using the five narrative components: problem, funding rationale, value proposition, evidence and proof, and call to action.
4. Use creative concepts to reinforce the message, not replace it.
5. Use the message matrices to turn the strategy into actual fundraising copy

To learn more about how this narrative was developed, see the Annex.

CORE PRINCIPLES

The Golden Thread

Unifying principles and message positioning across all audience segments

The Investment Case Child Online Safety

GOLDEN THREAD:
Child Online Safety is critical infrastructure. Without it every system pays more.

In a digital world, child safety is not a niche issue. It is foundational infrastructure.

When that infrastructure is weak, Child Online Safety - and harms- increase.

When children are not safe online, the impact does not stay online.

- It shapes their mental health, learning, and life outcomes.
- It affects workforce readiness, social stability, and long-term development.
- It influences trust in digital platforms and the systems that underpin modern economies.

At the same time, digital environments are evolving faster than protection systems. The gap is growing. But it is solvable.

There is evidence of what works to close that gap. What is missing is coordinated investment to scale them.

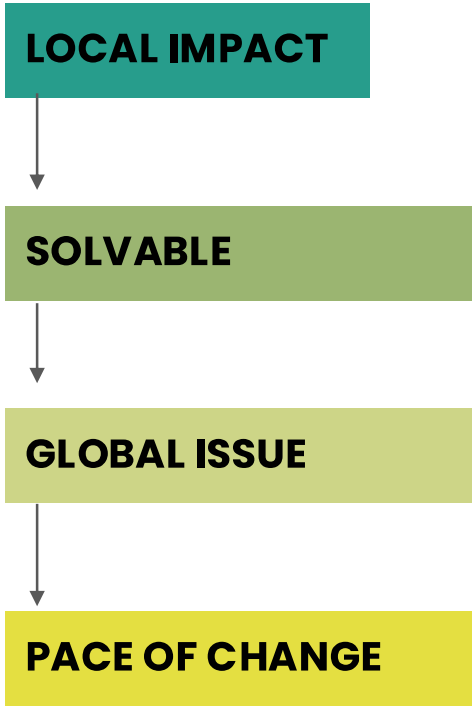
There are capable organizations already solving critical pieces of the ecosystem, from prevention to response to policy change.

The underlying narrative informed by cross-cutting insights

Child online safety is a global, borderless challenge, but its impact is deeply personal. The same digital systems that connect children across continents shape the experiences of children in our own homes, schools and communities.

Funders are rarely persuaded by alarm alone. They respond when the issue feels urgent, concrete, and within reach of action. The financial advocacy tools must therefore **connect the global scale of digital harm to its local consequences**, while demonstrating that coordinated capital can strengthen the systems that protect children.

This is not simply a moral appeal. It is an infrastructure challenge in a rapidly evolving digital world. When investment is aligned strategically, global systems become safer, and that safety reaches every child, including our own.



Six Principles to apply across your financial advocacy tools

Across philanthropy, governments, tech and private sector, testing insights revealed a need for an 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. They should underpin all messaging and visuals that form the financial narrative.



Frame the issue as urgent, but solvable

Research showed that catastrophic framing created overwhelm (*"Very alarming... feels out of reach"*). 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.

Narrative implication: Anchor the "why now" in pace of change and system lag, but always show that coordinated investment can close the gap.



Reduce distance, make the issue feel personally relevant

Child Online Safety is a global systems challenge, but funders engage when it feels relevant to their own communities and children. In particular for family foundations, big tech, governments and private sector, they're most motivated to fund solutions that directly impact their local communities. Using framing that localises impact of online risks, helps to reduce psychological distance and increases salience.

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



Create agency, showing how capital can change the system

The dominant barrier is not awareness, it is overwhelm by a seemingly unsolvable issue. In testing, funders repeatedly asked what they could actually do to solve the issue (*"What are the next three things I can do?"*). They need to see their role in a structured solution.

Narrative implication: Make the funding gap visible and show how coordinated capital strengthens infrastructure, reduces duplication and embeds safeguards. Show what changes and the potential impact as a result of a funder's investment, so they can see what contribution their capital can make..

Six Principles to apply across your financial advocacy tools



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.

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



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 helps build credibility in your organization's work, increasing their viability as an investment vehicle.

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



Keep it concrete, clear and credible

Abstract framing and overly technical language risks reducing engagement. Grantees seek a usable toolkit of messages that they can apply for their fundraising communications.

Tech companies look for language that demonstrates your organization's technical expertise, but that doesn't overpromise the level of protection possible and doesn't villainise technology.

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

SEGMENTATION

Our audiences

Why one narrative spine must flex across different funding audiences.

A need for targeted, audience-specific messaging



The crisis of online child exploitation and abuse is global, complex, and accelerating. No single actor - not governments, not philanthropy, not technology companies, not civil society - can solve it alone. What's needed is coordinated investment in the systems, evidence, and innovations that can keep pace with the digital age.

The mission is shared, but the reasons to fund differ. Philanthropy, technology companies, and governments each need a different investment logic, different proof, and a different role for its partners.

This financial narrative therefore identifies one overarching narrative spine and then shows how to adapt it for the three primary audience groups.

Adapting the Investment Case:

- **Philanthropy:** Your organization turns fragmented efforts into system level impact, ensuring your funds lead to measurable and scalable returns for children.
- **Tech Companies:** Your organization is a strategic partner co-developing and funding child safety solutions that build user trust and protect your company's reputation.
- **Government:** Your organization helps prevent long term social and economic costs driven by digital harm.

Three Primary 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 want your organization to play.



Philanthropy

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

Large Philanthropic Organizations
Institutional foundations and major grantmakers 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 (HNWI)
Individual donors, often acting through personal conviction or family values, who are more likely to respond first to emotionally resonant and human-centred narratives before engaging with systems logic.



Tech Companies

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

Across both big and mid-sized tech companies, the role of the stakeholder you are discussing funding with is key. Motivations differ greatly across leadership, policy teams, safety and product teams.



Government

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
Typically higher-income governments (e.g., UK, France, Australia) and multilateral actors focused 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.

Secondary Audiences and Their Role in the Narrative Ecosystem

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.

Included in the research for this narrative:



Private Sector

Non-tech corporates, financial institutions, and corporate foundations that may engage through CSR, 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 were not a primary audience for this financial narrative, as they are a very diverse group with unique motivations depending on geography, organisational focus, local regulation, public pressure etc. However, they were included in the research given their funding potential. Once high-potential funders within the private sector are identified, recommendations within this strategy can be used to inform their fundraising tools.

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.

NARRATIVE COMPONENTS

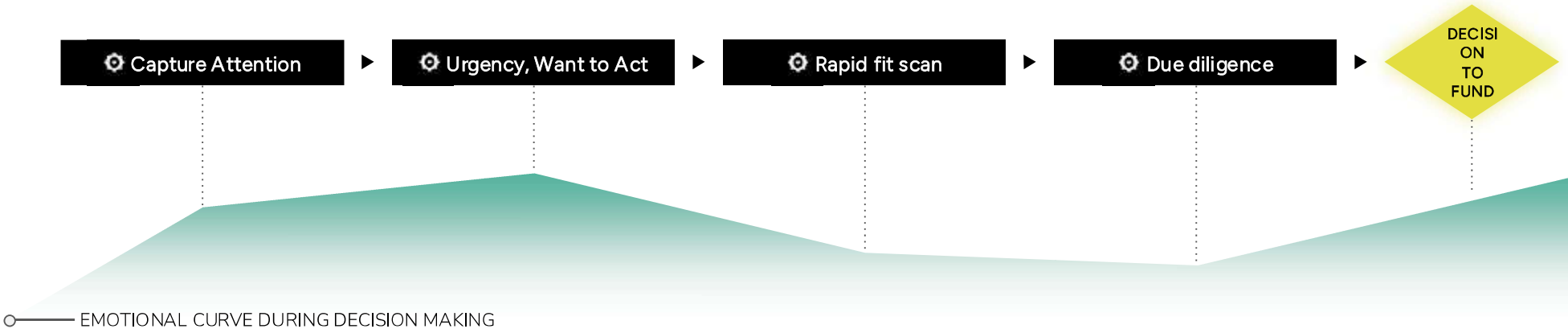
The Building Blocks

5 Narrative components that outline the financial narrative



The Decision Journey to Funding

The decision to fund is not a singular 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.



EMOTIONAL CURVE DURING DECISION MAKING

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.

Emotionally resonant, tangible, solvable, human.

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 strong sense of pace, consequence and relevance is critical here, ensuring the issue feels both important and time-sensitive.

Time, Pace, Consequences of inaction

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 serious consideration.

Clear role for funder, strategic alignment, pathway to solutions

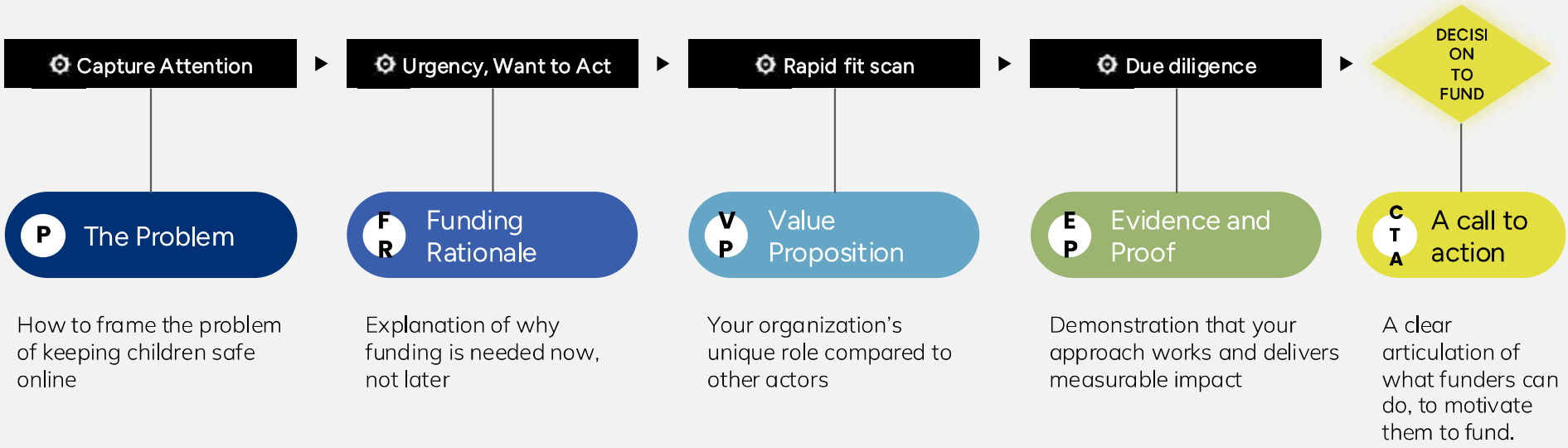
Finally, funders evaluate impact evidence, scalability, credibility and governance structures. They assess risk, return and feasibility, and look for proof that the proposed investment will deliver measurable, system-level outcomes. Overpromising undermines confidence; credible data helps to build it.

Data, metrics, system-level impact

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

A narrative tells a story of many parts

To align with how funders actually make decisions, the financial narrative should be structured in five core components, with 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.



Creative expressions are the visual and metaphorical devices that bring each narrative component to life. They will complement, but not replace the core message framing.

These five components provide a repeatable structure for how you can frame its messaging when speaking to potential funders across pitch decks, proposals, and partnership conversations.

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

P The Problem

COMPONENT OVERVIEW ● ○

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 organizational level. Thus, human-centered perspectives focusing on what parents and children actually 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 (e.g. “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 a massive and 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, chose data in terms of cases taken to court).

Top Problem Framings:

Primary attention driver:

- Parental lens: Every child is at risk. It could be your child
- Pace of technological change

Secondary frame:

- Systemic and global coordination gaps

P The Problem

COMPONENT OVERVIEW

Key Messages:

Child online safety may be a global issue, but the impacts are very local.

No child is immune, this could be your child.

Human Impact First

The Borderless Threat in our Backyards

Globally, 1 in 8 children have been victims of the non-consensual sharing of sexual images[1], and 1 in 3 young people report being asked to share sexual imagery by someone they met online[1]. These statistics can feel distant, but the reality is much closer to home. In 60% of online abuse cases, the perpetrator is someone the child already knows [2]. The digital world is no longer separate from "real life"; it is where our children form their identities, build trust, and, increasingly, where they are exploited. Children within our own homes and neighbourhoods are impacted.

Think about the last time you dropped your child off at school. You didn't wonder whether the building was safe. You assumed it was, because we built systems to make it so (fire drills, building inspections, pick-up rules). We decided, as a society, that protecting children in physical spaces was non-negotiable. We haven't made that same decision about digital spaces. Yet.

Pace of technology

Technology is developing faster than our systems are adapting, but it's not an unstoppable train

In modern social gaming environments, a predator can lock a child into a high-risk grooming conversation in as little as 19 seconds[2]. Malicious actors are adapting instantaneously, utilising sophisticated tools that easily slip through outdated legal frameworks and fragmented detection systems.

But it is a solvable gap. We have the tools to catch up, we just need the coordination and capital to deploy them.

1. *Safe Online. (2025). Coalition financing deck [Internal presentation].*
2. *WeProtect Global Alliance. (2023). Global Threat Assessment 2023: Assessing the scale and scope of child sexual exploitation and abuse online, to transform the response*

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 greatly 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 values alignment or alignment with their organisational priorities to consider funding.

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 HNWIs, are mostly interested in funding impact within their local geographies. They are attracted to messaging and visuals that suggests 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 need to feel their agency - what can they bring to the table that others can't? Why is there investment crucial?

Segment-specific recommendations:

"...as a philanthropist thinking about policies and the system those make sense to me... our board is increasingly interested in contributing to where they can see that there's a much larger plan and structure..."

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.

"These leaders are parents, these leaders are grandparents... you got to go for the gut"

Small, family, tech philanthropy: This segment responds 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 are already aware and know this is an issue to solve – they reject problem framings that suggest tech is to blame, or that highlight the problem in geographies they don't 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 despite technology advances attempting to fight the problem, the issue still prevails- there is a need for coordinated action, including from tech, to fight it.

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 and CSR departments often tie their philanthropic strategies directly to their business footprint. A tech company may only want to give to causes that affect communities where they operate.

Its 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.

Segment-specific recommendations:

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 centered on improving outcomes for children rather than on "fixing" technology itself.

"It is a well trodden argument to say that technology is the problem. It is a much more necessary discussion to say that this is an all-of-society issue that affects all levels."

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. In particular, for governments where digital adoption is rapidly growing without regulation in place.

"They fully realize that they're constantly on the back foot, that technology's developing faster. Institutional systems and policies can't keep up. And so I think they're hearing that and looking for the hacks, for the ways in which we can start to turn that around."

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.

Segment-specific recommendations:

HMIC and governments already funding/ interested: Many HMIC governments, e.g. France, 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.

LMIC: 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 far away from them.

"All of my responses are probably also influenced by the fact that you cannot get reliable data in Iraq. We don't have centralized systems for collecting data. So data is very compelling here. All of our stakeholders will ask well what's the scope of the problem?"

Funding Rationale

Urgency, want to act

COMPONENT OVERVIEW ● ○

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 financial cost of inaction, philanthropies are motivated by the cost of inaction on wider philanthropic priorities- if they don't act now, what will the cost be on other development goals.

If we don't 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 to 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.

Top Funding Rationale Framings:

Top frame: Digital safety is no longer a niche issue — it shapes mental health, learning, workforce readiness, gender equality, social cohesion, and civic participation.

Funders often find it compelling to pair this rationale with the fact that tools and evidence-based approaches to navigate a rapidly shifting technology landscape, do exist.

For government funders, the cost of inaction makes the strongest case of all.

Funding Rationale

COMPONENT OVERVIEW

Key Message:

This is no longer a niche issue – it impacts every part of childhood. Without investment now, it will have a greater cost later for:

- Other philanthropic priorities (philanthropy)
- National systems (governments)
- User trust (tech).

Beyond the screen: A Cross-Sector Crisis

Child Online Safety is not a niche issue- it is fundamentally interconnected with global education, mental health, cognitive development, and human rights. Because online safety sits at this intersection, investing in this space generates powerful multiplier effects- boosting workforce readiness and economic output, improving learning outcomes and reducing long-term social costs.

The Staggering Cost of Inaction

Digital threats are evolving at breakneck speed, far outpacing the fragmented resources currently available to combat them. This gap carries a devastating human and economic toll.

The projected cost of inaction in critical adolescent development and protection areas over the next decade is an alarming US$20.5 trillion—draining over 6% of GDP annually in studied nations. Failing to invest in safe digital futures does not just leave millions of children exposed to exploitation; it actively undermines socio-economic progress. We are at a critical window where the decisions made today will dictate whether the digital world becomes a space of opportunity or irreversible danger for future generations.

1. Sheehan, P., Rasmussen, B., Sweeny, K., Maharaj, N., Symons, J., Davidson, S., Nguyen, H., & Kumnick, M. (2023). Adolescents in a changing world: the case for urgent investment - Executive Summary. Victoria Institute of Strategic Economic Studies, Victoria University
2. Safe Online. (2025). Coalition financing deck [Internal presentation].
3. Deloitte. (2024). Final evaluation report: Impact evaluation of Safe Online investment portfolio 2018-2024 [Internal evaluation report].

Philanthropy

Philanthropy feel the need to prioritise Child Online Safety when they see the impact not doing anything now will have on their other priorities.

What's 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 quickly connect that to your organization''s ability to scale 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.

"...people within landscape don't want to talk about technology. They want to talk about what social problem they're solving. And that's a human issue."

Segment-specific recommendations:

Small, family, and HNWI philanthropy:
Lead with immediacy and personal relevance. This segment is more values-driven and responds strongly to emotional proximity and relatability.

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're motivated to invest now in solutions with proven results. Efficiency arguments such as 'this technological solution can help 10x more kids, compared to traditional methods, with each $'. Something is worth investing in now if it has a clear ROI and proven efficiencies compared to other methods.

"...from a tech angle, we get incoming from a LOT of organizations, and showing proven results as part of the pitch is really important. We've already done this, we know how to do this, we need to supercharge it with your help."

Tech broadly: seek to supercharge proven results
Tech respondents strongly favored the rationale highlighting that partners, tools, and evidence-based approaches" to deploy proven solutions quickly, ex*ist*. The tech sector is inundated with pitches from organizations seeking support. Highlight your organization's 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.

Focus on implications for tech, not beyond. Do not frame the rationale as "protecting every dimension of childhood", as at an organisational level, caring for children is not usually a business priority.

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's 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.

"...cost of inaction... We used that line of argument that as.. social interaction moves into digital sphere that becomes the arena or theatre where all protection issues will unfold in the future. We are very unprepared and we need to get out ahead of it, [if not these] are implications if we don't. That has been compelling to government stakeholders."

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.

Segment-specific recommendations:

Multilateral organizations: value solutions that can be scaled now

Emphasize 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

Evidence & Proof

COMPONENT OVERVIEW ● ○

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 organizational 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 by qualitative context. "Empty" numbers fall flat; for example, citing the number of technological innovations deployed has little relevance unless accompanied by the "so what?".

Philanthropy

"I'm always a bit wary of ... big numbers of reach without clear descriptions of impact.. make sure we're not just counting numbers"

Answer the "so what?" question
Philanthropy 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.

Segment-specific recommendations:

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: For this sub-segment 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" actually 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

"...showing proven results as part of the pitch is really important...we've already done this, know how to do this. We need to supercharge it with your help."

The tech sector's preferences for evidence depend 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.

Segment-specific recommendations:

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 prioritize quantifiable, black-and-white metrics that can be tracked over time.
- **Product-focused stakeholders** within these companies, high-level strategy decks and generalized data are less helpful. They require 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 decision.

❗ **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 massive internal legal and engineering teams of Big Tech, they are looking for practical, plug-and-play solutions and concrete business justifications.

- **Outsourced Tools and Integration Use Cases**: they need evidence showing exactly how the 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 standard, 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

"I don't like the emotion... We don't act for individual. We act for society. We need figures, facts, scientific study"

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 LMICs and Multilaterals, some European diplomats react poorly to it, viewing "if you don't fund this, things will get worse" as an aggressive, guilt-inducing hook

Navigate Internal Mandates
Tailoring data to sectoral interests The data selected to portray the issue must be tailored precisely to the sectoral interest of the specific ministry being pitched. For example:

- 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

Segment-specific recommendations:

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

LMIC: In data-poor environments, qualitative survivor stories are often met with the question: "Yes, but how many of those children exist?".

- **Prevalence Data is Key:** To justify prioritizing this issue over other constant national emergencies, local policymakers desperately need localized prevalence data (such as the Disrupting Harm reports) to understand exactly how many of their own children are impacted.
- **Actionable Results:** They favor 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

How the narrative might be adjusted for secondary audiences

GENERAL PUBLIC

"Parents tend to downplay the risk. Parents worry more about the time kids spend in front of the screen rather that who is on the other side of the screen."

Offer Nuance: Despite their passion, parents often misunderstand the true 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 showcased in the narrative approach. Experts noted that Child Online Safety is becoming an electoral issue, driven by parents of the survivors and grassroots movements from parents advocating for a smartphone free childhood.

PRIVATE SECTOR

"You're corporate, you want to know that it will help you with customer retention and ultimately by retaining customers it's contributing to profitability..."

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.

"How do I make this person I'm speaking with in the corp. a hero."

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

MEDIA

Explain the structures behind human stories: Currently, media coverage is highly episodic, reactive, and driven by catastrophes (like child suicide), 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.

Financial Advocacy Narrative

CREATIVE CONCEPTS

Reducing friction between understanding and action

A creative translation that builds on and supports the narrative and existing brand

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 serves three functions:

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

Let's look at the six narrative principles and what they mean for creative execution. .

Existing communications often succeed in conveying scale and credibility, but can fall short in emotional resonance, clarity of role, and actionable pathways to funding. Creative execution can help bridge this gap, moving audiences from understanding to action.

Creative Implications of the 6 Narrative Principles



Frame the issue as urgent, but solvable

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

Consider:

- Emphasizing the gap between safeguards and the pace of change
- Pairing risk with visible solutions or progress. Never leave a risk alone without a driven 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 should make a global, systemic issue feel immediate and close to home, reducing psychological distance.

Consider:

- Embracing “your” and “our” framing, not distant population groups. Research showed funders engage with Child Online Safety first as a parent and individual then as donor.
- 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.

Creative Implications of the 6 Narrative Principles



Create agency, showing how capital translates to system change

Creative implication: Creative 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:

- Highlighting "with or without" funding scenarios to highlight consequence of not funding
- Make the pathway from donor funding to outcome more explicitly. Funder + your organization =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 doesn't mention system-level change



Lead with human impact, then pivot to system infrastructure

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

Consider:

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

Avoid:

- Leading with data, policy or institutional language
- Emotional storytelling with no connection to systemic change
- Focussing too much on only emotion or only evidence alone, or where the two narratives feel unrelate

Creative Implications of the 6 Narrative Principles



Demonstrate systemic impact and outcomes, not just activity or reach

Creative implication: Show what changed. Creative should give platform to tangible outcomes, not just activities, focussing on what is different because of your organization's work.

Consider:

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

Avoid:

- Focusing primarily on reach, process or outputs (e.g. number of people engaged)
- 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. Don't be afraid to ask.

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

A few other words of caution



Avoid over-simplistic representations

Avoid visuals that reduce online harm to a simple predator-and-victim narrative. Imagery built around strangers, traps, or overt threat not only risks alienating the audience but can actively misrepresent the issue, reinforcing myths that most harm comes from unknown actors, when in reality it most often comes from peers.



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.



Emphasize 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.

Inspiration for creative copy for bring the narrative to life

Creative copy reflect the overall narrative components. The following concepts can be activated at different stages of the decision journey to fund. These options may provide starting points from which to build out a creative treatment for a speech, presentation, article or campaign.

Ignoring online safety undermines every investment in children.

Online harm doesn't *stay* online.

SUPPORTING IDEAS:

- There's no such thing as an offline childhood. There is no child wellbeing without online safety.
- If we care about child health, education, protection, or mental wellbeing, we can't ignore the safety of the digital spaces where their lives increasingly unfold

Online safety: it's been too easy to dismiss

✓ Education
✓ Health
✓ Protection
✓ Child development
✗ **Online safety**

SUPPORTING IDEAS

- We've done half the job: kids safety in the real world has real, binding structure. But online safety? It's been too easy accept a world without it, or dismiss it like an app notification.
- It's easy to miss the links between online safety and real world child wellbeing... Let's make it harder to dismiss...

Inspiration for creative copy for bring the narrative to life

Creative copy reflect the overall narrative components. The following concepts can be activated at different stages of the decision journey to fund. These options may provide starting points from which to build out a creative treatment for a speech, presentation, article or campaign.

Remember when we didn't think this was unsafe?

typing in a 12345 password in on the bank website
/ allowing full access to photos / replying to a weird message

We know better now. It's time to protect our kids' online lives.

SUPPORTING IDEAS:

- As technology evolves, it's changing what it means to be a kid, and what it means to be able to stay safe.
- We need to unite now around ensuring that what we disrupt as we innovate isn't kids' futures.
- Protection that keeps pace. What was once seen as unsafe, is now a security habit.

Our children live online. It's time to build the protections they need.

SUPPORTING IDEAS:

- Every house has an entrypoint.
- Children live online. But their protections are still under construction.
- Together, we can finish building their protections.
- The house metaphor suggests design, responsibility, and the idea that we can fix it.
- Children live online. Protection must too.
- Children live online. But no one childproofed the house.
- In the digital age, protecting children's wellbeing means protecting them wherever they live—including online.

Inspiration for creative copy for bring the narrative to life

Creative copy reflect the overall narrative components. The following concepts can be activated at different stages of the decision journey to fund. These options may provide starting points from which to build out a creative treatment for a speech, presentation, article or campaign.

We don't let it happen in *real* life.

Are our kids ~~online~~ safe?

SUPPORTING IDEAS:

- Our kids deserve the same protection online as they do in real life.
- Parents stop at nothing to keep their kids safe in the real world.
- Every Child. Every Space. Protected.
- Online IRL

✓ Film ratings
✓ Bike helmets
✓ Smoking ban
✗ **Online safety**

**We protect kids everywhere.
Except online.**

SUPPORTING IDEAS:

- We've done half the job: kids safety in the real world has real, binding structure.
- But online safety? It's been too easy accept a world without it, or dismiss it like an app notification.

MESSAGE MATRIX

Tying the messaging and segments together

MESSAGE MATRIX:

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.

Narrative Component (Journey Stage)	Key Message Framing	Sub-group	Example Messages
The problem (capture attention)	*Human impact first:* Lead with a human, household level frame that makes a global issue feel local and immediate, then introduce the systems gap.	HNWI individuals, family foundations, programme staff	• "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." • "Every parent expects their child to be safe in school or on the playground. Today, that same expectation must extend to the digital spaces where children now spend much of their lives." • "When children log on, they enter a digital world built for adults. Protecting them shouldn't depend on chance — it should be built into the systems around them."
	Pace of technology: Digital environments are evolving faster than the systems designed to project children. Frame as an urgent, solvable coordination issue rather than an unstoppable catastrophe	Relevant for 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." • "The challenge is not a lack of solutions. It is that the systems protecting children have not kept pace with the digital world."
Funding Rationale (Urgency)	*Cross-sector impact:* Demonstrate impact wider impact on other philanthropic priorities e.g.mental health, education, gender equality, and how investment delivers multiple outcomes	Relevant for all philanthropy	• "Digital risks are expanding rapidly. Digital safety is no longer a niche issue. It directly influences mental health, education, and social cohesion. Funding now protects every dimension of childhood." • "Investing in online safety strengthens multiple systems supporting children's wellbeing."
Evidence and Proof	*The 1-2 Punch:* Start with the "Survivor Journey" to establish *why* they should care (the emotional hook), and immediately follow it with "Systemic Scale" data to prove the investment's depth, breadth, and ROI (the rational validation).	All philanthropy	• "When 13-year-old Ana faced online extortion, she found immediate support through a local hotline. We scaled this critical lifeline, expanding hotline capacity across 52 countries to protect millions of children like Ana."
	Real-world systemic outcomes; Provide evidence of tangible systems change	Large institutional philanthropy	• "We measure outcomes over time, not just initial reach. In 86 countries, we have strengthened legal and regulatory frameworks, ensuring that child online protection is permanently embedded into national systems."

MESSAGE MATRIX OVERVIEW:



Philanthropy

Overall narrative arc for Philanthropy:

The digital world has expanded faster than the systems protecting children.

The risks affect children everywhere, including in our own communities.

Solutions exist, but efforts remain fragmented and under coordinated.

Philanthropic investment accelerates systemic protection for millions of children.

⚓ Key Messaging Anchors

Leverage
Philanthropy wants to fund catalytic interventions that unlock larger change.

System change
Policy reform, institutional capacity, and governance improvements matter more than small-scale programmes.

Credibility
Clear evidence, transparency and governance increase willingness to fund.

Agency
Funders want to understand exactly what their capital enables.

❌ Key terms to avoid:

- Crisis-only or fatalistic framing
- Implying philanthropy alone must solve the problem
- Overly technical governance language early in the narrative

MESSAGE MATRIX:

Tech Companies

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

Narrative Component (Journey Stage)	Key Message Framing	Sub-group	Example Messages
The problem (capture attention)	*Children are entering digital environments built for adults:* Lead with children and real-world consequences, not abstract technology language. This makes the issue tangible without triggering defensiveness.	Leadership, product teams	• "Children are navigating digital environments originally designed for adults." • "The internet was not built with children in mind — but children now grow up inside it."
	Safety systems need to evolve with technology: Frame the challenge as one of evolution and adaptation, not failure or blame.	Relevant for all tech	• "Technology is evolving rapidly, and the systems designed to protect children must evolve with it." • "The challenge is not whether digital environments are changing. It is whether safety systems are evolving quickly enough to keep children protected."
Funding Rationale (Urgency)	*Trust and expectations are rising:* Frame urgency around trust, legitimacy, and rising expectations from users, regulators, and society.	Leadership, policy, trust and safety	• "Expectations around child safety online are rising fast. Investing now helps strengthen the systems that build user trust and long-term legitimacy." • "Safer digital environments are no longer optional. They are part of what users, regulators, and society increasingly expect."
	No one company can solve this alone: Emphasise shared responsibility and ecosystem-level action.	Relevant for all tech	• "No company can solve child online safety alone. Addressing this challenge requires shared solutions across platforms, governments, and civil society."
Evidence and Proof	*Concrete case studies and user stories:* Product and strategy audiences want specific, tailored examples and user stories rather than generic decks or abstract claims.	Relevant for all tech	• Show one clear example of how a child safety intervention worked in practice, with direct user relevance and a concrete outcome.
	Ecosystem impact with real outcomes: Demonstrate how you have scaled interventions, while avoiding vanity metrics or claims of perfect protection.	Relevant for all tech	• *"Our interventions have tested been tested at scale and our learnings have been shared across the ecosystem."*

MESSAGE MATRIX OVERVIEW:



Tech Companies

Overall narrative arc for Tech Companies:

Children are navigating digital environments that were not always initially designed with them in mind.

Safety systems must evolve alongside technology.

Expectations around child safety online are rising.

No one company can solve this challenge alone.

Your organization helps partners co-develop, test, and scale credible solutions.

⚓ Key Messaging Anchors

Collaboration
No single company can solve online safety alone.

Ecosystem responsibility
Safety must be built across the digital ecosystem.

Trust and legitimacy
Users and regulators expect platforms to protect children.

Innovation
Technology companies play a critical role in developing solutions.

❌ Key terms to avoid:

- Presenting technology as the issue
- Suggesting tech systems are not adapting or keeping up- they are evolving.
- “Complete” protection

MESSAGE MATRIX:

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.

Narrative Component (Journey Stage)	Key Message Framing	Sub-group	Example Messages
The problem (capture attention)	*People at risk first:* Start with children and the seriousness of the issue before moving into systems language. This helps attract attention even for institutional audiences.	Relevant for all	• "For today's children, the digital world is no longer separate from everyday life — and the risks are increasingly real."
	Protection systems are struggling to keep pace: Frame urgency around the reality that policy, systems, and institutional capacity are constantly on the back foot.		• "Governments are being asked to respond to digital harms with systems that were not built for the pace and scale of today's online risks."
Funding Rationale (Urgency)	*The Cost of Inaction:* Economic framing to motivate Finance and Economy Ministries.	Relevant for all governments	• *"Every year of inaction drives up short and long-term costs in enforcement, healthcare, and economic loss."*
	Digital harm is becoming a core governance challenge: Position the issue as central to how governments protect children in a digital age, not as a niche digital issue.	Relevant across governments	• "As more of children's lives move online, child protection systems must adapt to a new arena of risk." • "The digital sphere is increasingly where broader protection challenges will unfold in the future."
	Scalable solutions can be deployed now: Urgency is stronger when paired with proof that ready-now, scalable interventions already exist.	Donor governments, multilaterals	• "Proven solutions already exist. The priority now is to scale and implement them where they are most needed." • "This is a timely investment because the tools, partnerships, and evidence are already in place."
Evidence and Proof	*System-scale evidence:* Governments and multilaterals are less persuaded by emotional stories alone and need data, prevalence, reach, and system outcomes to justify investment.	Relevant for all governments and multilaterals	• "Our learnings have strengthened legal frameworks, reporting systems, and institutional capacity across multiple countries." • "The strongest proof is not just that activity happened, but that national systems are stronger because of it."
	Sector-specific and mandate-relevant data: Tailor evidence to the ministry or institution's remit. The same problem should look different to justice, health, education, or finance audiences.	Specific government ministries	• For education audiences, show how online harm affects attendance, wellbeing, and learning." • For justice and interior audiences, show case handling, reporting capacity, and enforcement readiness.
	Local prevalence and implementation relevance: In LMICs and data-poor contexts, local data is essential to justify prioritisation.	LMIC governments	• Show how many children are affected locally and what interventions have already improved response capacity.

MESSAGE MATRIX OVERVIEW:



Governments

Overall narrative arc for Governments:

Children are at risk in fast-evolving digital environments

Systems and policy are struggling to keep pace

Delayed action raises future social and financial cost

Your organization helps governments direct resources to proven, scalable responses

Investment now strengthens national systems and reduces future burden

⚓ Key Messaging Anchors

Collaboration
No single entity can solve online safety alone.

Ecosystem responsibility
Safety must be built across the digital ecosystem.

Trust and legitimacy
Users and regulators expect platforms to protect children.

Innovation
Technology companies play a critical role in developing solutions.

❌ Key terms to avoid:

- Vague emotional appeals without data
- Pure “global” framing without local relevance
- Aggressive guilt framing

MEASUREMENT

Measuring effectiveness of the financial narrative



Measuring effectiveness of the narrative

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.

1. Attention → Awareness of the issue

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

Signals

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

2. Interest → Engagement with your organization

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

Signals

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

3. Consideration → Due diligence

Goal: Funders evaluate your organization as a potential investment partner.

Signals

- Requests for concept notes or proposals
- Invitations to present to investment committees
- Requests for deeper evidence or impact data
- Follow-up meetings with senior leadership

4. Commitment → Funding decisions

Goal: Narrative contributes to new funding commitments or partnerships.

Signals

- New grants or multi-year commitments
- Corporate partnership agreements
- Inclusion in government or multilateral funding strategies
- Repeat investments from existing donors

METHODOLOGY

Annex 1: How this financial narrative was developed

Our research and testing approach

Phase 1 – Discovery

We conducted a desk review of over 70 documents and ran 8 stakeholder interviews (2 x government, 2 x philanthropy and 2 x technology companies, 2 x Safe Online) to understand the barriers to funding Child Online Safety, analysed against the COM-B Behavioural Model.

We also analysed past campaigns from adjacent social impact issues, alongside Safe Online's previous communications materials, to identify the levers and drivers that have been used to motivate funding.

This culminated in an Inception Report and narrative prototypes, which were then tested and refined in Phase 2.

Phase 2 – Testing

We validated the advocacy narrative with a targeted group of funders, including representatives from government and multilaterals, philanthropy, the private sector, and technology companies.

During in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, we tested prototype messaging to assess different message framings and determine the most effective framings for motivating the decision to fund.

Snapshot of some of the organisations who took part in the testing phase:

Google · Microsoft · THE WORLD BANK · RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE · the ELMA group of foundations · MTN · Vodafone Foundation

Phase 1

- **70+ Documents**
- **8 x Stakeholder Interviews**
  - 2 x Government
  - 2 x Philanthropy
  - 2 x Tech Companies
  - 2 x Safe Online
- **1 x grantee survey**

Phase 2

- **14 interviews and focus group discussions in total, with 17 organisations represented**
  - 5 x Philanthropy
  - 2 x Private Sector
  - 4 x Tech Companies
  - 4 x Grantees
  - 4 x Government / Multilaterial

Our approach to building a narrative

Tested and built, block by block

We broke the narrative into 5 distinct 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 allowed us 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. Problem framing establishes urgency and relevance. The value proposition clarifies your organization's unique role and why it is well positioned to address the challenge. Evidence and proof build credibility and demonstrate impact. The funding rationale creates a timely "why now" moment for decision-makers. Finally, calls to action translate motivation into a clear next step.

By testing these elements individually and then together, we were able to refine each component while ensuring they reinforce one another, resulting in a narrative that is both coherent and persuasive for funders.

These five components should 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.