

Access2Funding

Transforming opportunities and outcomes for disabled entrepreneurs.

Partners: The Disability Policy Centre, Disability Rights UK, Meaningful Business and Clu.

Founding Signatories: Ascension & Ada Ventures.



Image alt-text: Image shows a light bright purple background, on the left hand side at the bottom in white writing it reads 'Investing in Disabled Entrepreneurs', above it is the logo for the campaign which is three rectangles stacked on top of one another, pink, white and dark purple with the words 'Access 2 Funding' written defending, there is a pink vertical rectangle next to that with a large '!'. On the right hand side of the image there is a young girl sitting on a bench smiling, she is wearing a metallic purple jacket, she has long brown hair and freckles.

Introduction

Access2Funding is the campaign committed to improving equitable investment in disabled-owned and disabled led businesses.

Disabled entrepreneurs face a backdrop of palpable disparities, inaccessibility and barriers to participation and opportunity when seeking investment.

Access2Funding challenges this reality.

Backed by investors and leading disability-focused organisations, committed to improving the equity of disabled communities; this campaign is pulling together disabled community's entrepreneurs for the first time to achieve three fundamental aims.

1. Collect ground breaking data on the barriers to disabled entrepreneurs growing their business.
2. Work with the global investment community to create more equitable support for disabled founders.
3. Grow a community of disabled founders and smashing the stigma around capability through storytelling.

Access2Funding is calling upon early-stage investors to break down barriers and improve accessibility, sending a clear message to disabled entrepreneurs that you are genuinely committed to access, diversity, and inclusion. It is time that businesses stop underestimating the value of disabled innovation and work together to unlock one of the most under-tapped opportunity pools in the world.

About Our Disabled Entrepreneurs

Geographical location:

- 38.5% said they are national
- 15.4% said they are outside the UK
- 30.8% said they are in Greater London
- 7.7% said they are in Yorkshire and The Humber
- 7.7% said they are in the South West
- 3.8% said they are in Northern Ireland
- 11.5% said they are in the North West
- 7.7% said they are in the North East
- 3.8% said they are in the East Midlands

Disability diversity representation:

- 36% have a Physical Condition
- 36% have a Mental Health Condition
- 24% have a Chronic Health Condition
- 44% are Neurodiverse
- 16% have a Sensory Condition
- 44% have a Non-visible Condition
- 4% have a Hearing Condition
- 8% stated other

Intersectionality representation:

- Ethnicity
- Gender identity
- Nationality
- Sexual orientation
- Religion and spirituality
- Race
- Intersectional disabilities
- Socio-economic status

50% of participants currently employ disabled people. 100% of participants said that they would employ more disabled people if they had better access to funding.

Current state of investment journey:

- 9.1% are Series A-E
- 13.6% are Seed
- 18.2% are Pre-Seed
- 59.1% are Angel or Friends and Family

The amount of capital attempted to raise by disabled entrepreneurs:

- 10.5% attempted to raise £0 to £1,000
- 5.3% attempted to raise £1,000 to £5,000
- 21.1% attempted to raise £5,000 to £25,000
- 10.6% attempted to raise £25,000 to £50,000
- 10.6% attempted to raise £50,000 to £100,000
- 31.6% attempted to raise £150,000 to £499,000
- 5.3% attempted to raise £500,000 to £1,000,000

The Current State of UK Investment in Disabled Entrepreneurs

Over 96% of survey participants said there is a lack of visibility on disabled entrepreneurs.

92% of survey participants said there is a lack of focus on investment opportunities for disabled entrepreneurs.

84% of survey participants said they do not have equal access to the same opportunities and resources as non-disabled entrepreneurs. The remaining 16% of survey participants answered maybe to this question. There was not a single 'yes' response to this question.

The barriers faced by disabled entrepreneurs:

- Accessibility barriers
- Absent participation opportunities
- Disability capability misconceptions
- Stereotypes
- Ableism and typecasting
- Lack of understanding and awareness
- Risk management misconceptions
- Inaccessible applications and systems

There are:

- 3.1 billion web search results for 'founder'.
- 1.2 billion web search results for 'black founder'.
- 400 million web search results for 'female founder'.
- 2.5 million web search results for 'disabled founder'.
- Disabled people are the largest minority group in the world, and over 20% of the population of the United Kingdom.
- That is therefore only 0.1% of the share of voice.

Of those unable to raise capital for their business:

- 50% said they did not have the same access to investors as non-disabled entrepreneurs.
- 50% said there is a lack of support and advice available for disabled entrepreneurs.
- 44% said that they initially did not have, and subsequently could not access adequate resources.
- 33% could not access investment opportunities due to inaccessible systems and processes.
- 33% said investors have competing priorities with disabled entrepreneurs
- 28% could not find any relevant information for disabled entrepreneurs.
- 33% said that all of these factors contributed to their inability to obtain capital.

Just 16.7% of disabled entrepreneurs said they are treated equally to non-disabled entrepreneurs in investment opportunities.

The Opportunity of Funding Disabled Entrepreneurs

Heading into economic uncertainty, with limited national resources to spend on infrastructure, one of the most significant social and

economic mobility assets is scaling entrepreneurship within every community.

Currently, disabled-owned businesses contribute almost 10% of the UK's GDP.

25% of small businesses are disabled-owned.

This proves a vast and untapped pool of highly competent, driven and creative business owners currently excluded from contributing even more to our economy. Using our initial findings, we can equate this missed opportunity to approximately £500M+ a year.

1. Disabled entrepreneurs contribute 9% of UK GDP.
2. Not investing in disabled entrepreneurs leaves £500+ million on the table.
3. 25% of small businesses are disabled-owned.

Joseph Williams (Co-Founder and CEO of Clu and Access2Funding Co-Founder) says “For so long, the astronomical potential of our creative, agile and highly-skilled community has been diminished because of a lack of understanding of the value we bring. It is our intention for this campaign to create a movement of attention and opportunity for our community and to shine a light on the vast

inequity we face when it comes to realising our potential as entrepreneurs.”

Celia Hensman (Co-Founding Director of The Disability Policy Centre and Access2Funding Co-Founder) says “Why is it that, despite many of the greatest thinkers and creators of all time coming from disabled communities we are still struggling to be taken seriously as entrepreneurs? Normalising disabled people being experts in subjects beyond being disabled is crucial to investing more money in disabled entrepreneurs.”

Victoria Jenkins (Founder of Unhidden Clothing) says “When the non-disabled don’t see us, they don’t consider us. The lack of opportunity we are presented with when looking to maximise our potential, and our businesses have gone unchallenged for too long. This must change.”

Diarra Smith (Head of Portfolio and Brand at Ada Ventures and Access2Funding Founding Signatory) says “We are passionate about finding and funding extraordinary talent as they build breakthrough ideas for the hardest problems we face. We believe bold ideas are the ones that change the world and this is why we wanted to be a part of #Access2Funding. Disabled entrepreneurs will build some of the most significant companies of the future.”

Supporting and Joining Access2Funding

Joining the pledge.

By joining the Access2Funding Pledge, you send a clear message to disabled entrepreneurs that you are serious about setting up for success. You will also become a pioneer for access, diversity and inclusion in your sector.

We work with signatories to improve their engagement with disabled founders by:

1. Improved language: adopting inclusive language across the deal flow.
2. Improved experience: offering accessible experiences across the end-to-end process.
3. Improved data: capturing the correct data in the correct way.

The timeline of Access2Funding.

- July 2022: campaign launch.
- Quarter 3 to 4 2022: survey distribution and initial analysis.
- Quarter 4 2022: survey preview released.
- Quarter 1 to 2 2023: access workshops with signatories.
- July 2023: signatories certified and survey published.

Support Us.

Help us get our campaign as far and wide as possible. We want to connect with more founders, local Chambers of Commerce, charities, education bodies and membership organisations to ensure we are getting the best diagnostic possible on current state of play and opportunities ahead of the official report release next Summer.

Please use #Access2Funding or #A2F when mentioning us online.

For more information on how you can get involved with this monumental campaign, please get in touch:

- For Signatories: access2funding@getaclu.io
- For media enquiries: liz@four-pr.com
- For research enquiries: contact@thedpc.org.uk
- For all other enquiries: access2funding@getaclu.io