Appendix 1: Online Freelancer Training (OFT) Lesson Plans

Based on our experience of implementing the Online Freelancer Training (OFT) programme in four countries, we have developed ready-to-use lesson plans and practical tips to help you lead the five core modules of the OFT programme. Each module packs information from real implementation experiences across different regions and target groups, and is designed to be flexible and modular, so you can adapt it based on the needs, backgrounds, and goals of your trainees.

You'll also find guidance on timing, flow, and facilitation methods to help you create a supportive learning environment—whether you're teaching online, in person, or using a blended approach.

When reviewing the lesson plans, ask yourself:

1. How can you structure and deliver each module in a way that's engaging and easy to follow?
2. What sequence, timing, and materials will help your training run smoothly?
3. How can you adapt each session to match the needs, skills, and contexts of your trainees?

Curriculum Overview

The OFT is structured into five core modules, each focusing on a key area of online freelancing. The table below provides a simplified overview of the full curriculum, including the main topics and sub-topics covered in each module.

Module	Topic	Sub-Topics
Module 1 *What is Online Freelancing?*	Understanding Digital Labour Platforms	Types of digital labour: location-based and cloud-based; introduction to platforms
	What to Expect as an Online Freelancer	Pros and cons; real-world insights into gig work
	Types of Work in Digital Labour Platforms	Overview of online work types and tasks on different platforms
Module 2 *Getting Started — Essential How-Tos*	Navigating Online Freelancing Platforms	Signing up, setting up profiles, understanding platform features
	Applying for an Online Freelancing Opportunity	Writing proposals, choosing tasks, setting fair pricing
	Landing an Online Freelancing Opportunity	Communicating with clients, managing tasks, understanding contracts
Module 3 *Key Skills for Online Freelancers*	Essential Soft Skills	Communication, time management, adaptability, negotiation
	Financial Skills	Budgeting, Minimum Acceptable Rate (MAR), saving, taxes
	Digital Skills and Tools	Tools for remote work, online safety, intellectual property
Module 4 *Managing a Competitive Profile*	Personal Branding – Creating a Competitive Profile	Building a strong freelancer profile; showcasing expertise
	Building and Leveraging Your Network: Ratings, Referrals, and Reviews	Ratings, referrals, and maintaining platform credibility
	Building a Successful Online Freelancing Career	Setting long-term goals and transitioning to entrepreneurship or formal jobs
	Gig Talk	Interactive session with experienced freelancers
Module 5 *Decent and Fair Working Conditions*	Introduction to Decent and Fair Working Conditions	Principles of fair work, decent working conditions, grievance mechanisms
	Fair Compensation and Payment Practices	Knowing value, negotiating pay, understanding platform deductions

Table A.1: Overview of the Online Freelancer Training Curriculum

> The manual was used to guide the development of the agenda and slides for the programme. We just ensured that we followed the online freelance workflow. It was therefore used as a baseline for building the training deck for the presentation.
>
> **Martin Atta-Fynn**
> Lead Trainer, *Online Freelancer Training*, AfriConsult, Ghana

Approach

The training modules are designed to introduce trainees to key concepts in online freelancing, digital work readiness, and fair working conditions. Each session follows a consistent structure—**Connect**, **Relate**, **Learn**, **Reflect**, and **Summarise**—to promote engagement, critical thinking, and personal application.

Connect opens the session with a familiar hook, or prompt that draws on trainees' experiences and sets the tone.

Relate introduces new ideas, or challenges by linking them to real-world stories, or contexts relevant to online freelancing.

Learn delivers key content through examples, tools, and actionable insights.

Reflect gives trainees space to internalise the content through discussions, activities, or personal goal setting.

Summarise reinforces the session's takeaways and prepares trainees for the next steps.

As a trainer, your role is to create a safe, inclusive, and interactive learning environment. Trainees may come from diverse educational, linguistic, and gender backgrounds, so use examples that reflect both high-tech and low-tech freelancing tasks. Invite discussion on how access, safety, or opportunity might differ by gender, location, or experience.

Inclusive practice tips are integrated throughout the sessions to help you actively encourage all trainees—especially women—to share their thoughts, express concerns, and assert their professional value. Make space for empathy-driven discussions around barriers, such as unequal pay, online safety, or cultural expectations.

Use the **localisation tips** to research and add local examples—platforms, associations, laws, taxation rules, opportunities, or events—where relevant. This will make the training more relatable and practical for your audience.

This approach centres on participation, self-awareness, and agency—equipping trainees not only with skills but also with the confidence to navigate digital workspaces fairly and successfully.

Module 1: What is Online Freelancing?

Objective

Introduce trainees—anyone interested in pursuing a career in online freelancing—to the concept of digital labour platforms and the various kinds of work available on them. Through this module, trainees will gain an initial understanding of platform-based gig work, its benefits and challenges, and begin to position themselves within the online freelancing ecosystem.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the classroom sessions, trainees will be able to:

- Understand key terms, such as *Digital Labour Platforms, Platform-Based Gig Work, Online Freelancing,* and *Cloudworkers.*
- Recognise the various types of web-based platforms and the categories of work offered through them.
- Reflect on their personal expectations and assess the pros and cons of becoming an online freelancer.
- Identify how and where they can fit into the platform economy, based on their current or potential skills.
- Use the internet to search for and explore digital labour platforms that match their competencies.

Module Outline

Session Topic	Activities	Materials Needed	Duration
Session 0: Icebreaker	- Trainer introduction - Trainee introductions and motivations - Group-building and trust-building activity	None	20 min
Session 1: Understanding Digital Labour Platforms	- Group brainstorming of known digital platforms - Clarifying two types of digital labour: location-based vs. online - Discuss what trainees need to know to begin freelancing	Papers and pens (or whiteboard in online sessions)	40 min
Mindfulness Break	Short reflection or quiet task (e.g., listing platforms to explore)	None	10 min
Session 2: What to Expect as an Online Freelancer	- Sharing and discussing expectations of freelancing - Compare with real-world pros and cons Watch or summarise ILO/Atingi freelancer stories	Projector or screen for video (offline sessions)	40 min
Mindfulness Break	Quiet activity (e.g., write down three freelance expectations)	None	10 min
Session 3: Types of Work in Digital Labour Platforms	- Brainstorm types of online work - Introduction to four types of web-based platforms - Discuss how platforms function (profiles, ratings, commissions)	Whiteboard or slides (optional)	40 min
Total Duration			**2 h 40 min**

Table A.2: Outline of Module 1: What is Online Freelancing?

Session 0: Welcome and Icebreaker

Objective: Build rapport and introduce course objectives.

CONNECT (20 min)

Briefly introduce yourself and the purpose of the course: to help trainees explore economic opportunities through online freelancing.

Invite each trainee to share their name, background, and what they hope to learn.

Use one of your preferred short icebreakers (e.g., "Two Truths and a Lie") to create a friendly atmosphere.

Encourage women trainees to speak early and openly. Ask what unique challenges or motivations they may have in entering the freelance space.

Session 1: Understanding Digital Labour Platforms

Objective: Identify and categorise digital platforms and understand the concept of online freelancing.

CONNECT (10 min)

Distribute paper slips and ask trainees to list known digital labour platforms (e.g., Upwork, Fiverr, Uber) and what services they offer.

If trainees struggle, prompt with examples: "Think of platforms for food delivery, transport, or online design."

Online/Hybrid Version: Use an online whiteboard, through Canva, Miro, or Figma.

RELATE (5 min)

Group responses and visually sort platforms into two categories:
Location-based work (e.g., Uber, Glovo)
Online freelancing (e.g., Fiverr, Upwork)

LEARN (10 min)

Explain the two broad categories:
Location-based: Physical presence needed (e.g., ridesharing, delivery)
Online freelancing: Work done entirely online (e.g., content writing, coding)

Highlight online freelancing as the focus of this course.

REFLECT (10 min)

Peer activity: Trainees list 5 questions they'd need answers to before starting as freelancers. Pairs exchange questions and discuss.

A sample list of questions is given below:

- What skills should I acquire?
- How can I get my first project?
- How can I navigate the platforms and understand them?
- How can I stay self-motivated?
- How can I reach out to potential clients?
- How can I build a portfolio?
- How can I understand pricing and contracts?
- How can I keep up with industry trends?
- How to manage finances and taxes?
- How to network with peers?

Ask trainees to reflect if their questions or needs might differ based on gender (e.g., time flexibility, care responsibilities, access to devices).

SUMMARISE (5 min)

Assign a short mindfulness task: "List 5 freelancing platforms you want to explore."

Session 2: Types of Work in Digital Labour Platforms

Objective: Explore the types of platforms and common freelance roles.

CONNECT (5 min)

Recap trainee lists from the previous task. Write a consolidated list of platforms on the board.

RELATE (10 min)

Share a day-in-the-life example of a freelancer. Show video ▶️ *A Day in the Life of a Freelance Web Developer* by Upwork. Ask trainees to describe what their own day might look like in 5-6 lines.

Sample: "I start my day checking Fiverr for new app or website testing jobs. I work in the morning, attend to my children mid-day, then resume with client emails by evening."

LEARN (10 min)

Introduce four platform types:

1. Freelance platforms (e.g., Upwork)
2. Contest-based (e.g., 99designs)
3. Competitive programming (e.g., Topcoder)
4. Microtasking (e.g., Clickworker)

Fold in top skills in demand like content writing, graphic design, coding, data entry, digital marketing, and virtual assistance. Emphasise that online freelancing offers opportunities across all skill levels—from basic data entry to advanced programming.

Highlight how certain tasks (e.g., content writing, virtual assistance) often attract more women. Ask trainees to discuss why and whether this affects how work is valued or paid.

REFLECT (10 min)

In groups, trainees share:

- One type of online work they're interested in.
- Three skills they think are essential for that role.

SUMMARISE (5 min)

Assign a mindfulness task: Ask trainees to jot down three expectations they have as a freelancer (e.g., income, flexible hours, working from home).

Session 3: What to Expect as an Online Freelancer?

Objective: Set realistic expectations for freelancing life.

CONNECT (10 min)

Ask volunteers to share their three expectations. Collect and write a master list on the board.

> As a fresher in online freelancing, my expectations were to learn about getting things started from scratch, such as making a compelling profile to attract high-value clients. This OFT programme addressed all my needs as a fresher and I feel very confident and aware.
>
> **Bipin Majhi**
> Trainee, *Online Freelancer Training*, Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, India

RELATE and LEARN (15 min)

Compare the shared expectations with this list:

- Flexible work hours.
- Global job access.
- Autonomy.
- Quick income (sometimes irregular).
- Skill growth opportunities.

Risks: lack of job security, wage theft, isolation.

Show selected short videos (or summarise) from Atingi and ILO: freelancers talk about flexibility, fair work, and challenges.

Ask if women might face unique barriers (e.g., unfair pay, lack of safe workspaces at home, or balancing care duties). Invite discussion.

REFLECT (10 min)

Class brainstorm: List pros and cons of platform work.

Examples:
Pros: flexible hours, diverse clients, independence.
Cons: no benefits, unpaid time, stress.

SUMMARISE (5 min)

Share key elements of how most freelancing platforms operate:

- Profile screening
- Task matching
- Commission structures
- Use of algorithms and reviews

Highlight the importance of understanding these systems to navigate platforms wisely.

Module 2: Getting Started — Essential How-Tos

Objective

This module equips trainees with the practical knowledge needed to navigate online freelancing platforms. It guides them through setting up a strong profile, identifying relevant job opportunities, and submitting effective proposals. It also helps trainees understand how to manage pricing, communicate with clients, and handle the initial stages of freelance work. Trainees will explore common challenges freelancers face and discuss strategies to overcome them.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, trainees will be able to:
- Create a profile on an online freelancing platform of their choice.
- Understand how to price their services, including how to set a Minimum Acceptable Rate (MAR).
- Use the platform's search tools to identify relevant job opportunities.
- Write professional, tailored proposals for online freelancing tasks.
- Understand the workflow after being selected for a job, including communication and contracts.
- Identify common challenges faced by online freelancers and ways to manage them.

Module Outline

Session Topic	Activities	Materials Needed	Duration
Session 1: Navigating Online Freelancing Platforms	- Reflect on trainees' target work type and platform - Lecture on profile creation and platform navigation - Discuss data sharing and platform algorithms	Projector (for videos in offline sessions)	40 min
Mindfulness Break	Quiet or reflective activity	None	10 min
Session 2: Applying for an Online Freelancing Opportunity	- Reflect on job descriptions and reasons to be selected - Guidance on writing winning proposals and pricing services - Self-reflection on MAR and pricing strategy	Handouts or notebooks	40 min
Mindfulness Break	Self-paced activity (e.g., journaling)	None	10 min
Session 3: Landing an Online Freelancing Opportunity	- Share challenges and best practices for landing first jobs - Learn about communicating with clients, interviews, and contracts - Discuss contract types and finding the first client	Whiteboard or flipchart (optional)	40 min
Total Duration			**2 h 20 min**

Table A.3: Outline of Module 2: Getting Started — Essential How-Tos

Session 1: Navigating Online Freelancing Platforms

Objective: To help trainees understand how to choose a suitable platform and navigate its basic features, including registration and setting up a profile.

CONNECT (5 min)

Welcome trainees and address any open questions from Module 1.

Start a discussion: What kind of online work are trainees interested in? Which platforms have they explored? Are they aligned with their skills and goals?

> Freelancing could be a major source of work and income, if taken seriously. Just like traditional jobs, in freelancing, you need to be abreast of soft skills and digital skills.
>
> **Herbert Bimpong**
> Trainee, *Online Freelancer Training*, Imperial General Assurance, Ghana

RELATE and LEARN (15 min)

Introduce common platforms and their elements. Walk trainees through these steps.
- Step 1: Understanding the platform structure
- Step 2: Signing up and exploring basic navigation

Identify and introduce locally relevant freelancing platforms popular in your region. This ensures trainees focus on platforms with the most opportunity and demand in their country.

REFLECT (15 min)

Facilitate a discussion on personal data sharing:
- What information do platforms typically ask for?
- What are trainees comfortable sharing?
- How do platforms use this data?

Use the *Data, algorithms and gig work* course by Atingi, *GDPR and privacy issues: the case of digital labour platforms and contact-tracing apps* by the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), and *The role of digital labour platforms in transforming the world of work* by the ILO to deepen understanding.

Consider how gender-related privacy concerns might affect comfort in sharing personal information. Some may prefer limiting visible details to avoid bias or harassment.

SUMMARISE (5 min)

Summarise key takeaways:
- How to identify suitable platforms.
- How to register and explore features.

Prep Work: Ask trainees to search for jobs on a platform that matches their interests.

Session 2: Applying for an Online Freelancing Opportunity

Objective: To equip trainees with the ability to identify relevant opportunities, write strong proposals, and determine how to price their services effectively.

CONNECT (10 min)

Have trainees choose a job listing that suits them and write down their top 3 reasons they would be a good fit. This builds confidence and clarity.

RELATE and LEARN (15 min)

Introduce the next step.
- Step 3: Applying for jobs via proposals or bids

Explain key aspects:
- Writing winning proposals (see examples on platforms like Upwork).
- Pricing strategies and calculating one's Minimum Acceptable Rate (MAR).
- Using tools like the 🔗 *Living Tariff Tool* by WageIndicator to estimate the minimum daily income needed to meet a basic standard of living, and to also identify hidden costs often associated with gig work, such as platform fees, internet costs, or software subscriptions. (Additional tips on setting freelancer rates and managing money are covered in *Module 3 – Session 2: Financial Skills.*)
- Factors influencing pricing (level of experience, estimated time, complexity of task).

Use resources such as:
- 🔗 *How To Create a Proposal That Wins Jobs* by Upwork.
- 🔗 *How To Set Your Freelance Rate and Project Pricing* by Upwork.

Be mindful that women freelancers often face undervaluation in pricing. Encourage confidence in setting rates that reflect your skills and market worth, overcoming societal undervaluing.

REFLECT (10 min)

Facilitate a self-reflection:
- **What factors affect their MAR?**
  Ask trainees to reflect on any personal or societal factors, including gender expectations, that might influence their pricing decisions.

- **What is their initial pricing point?**
  Encourage trainees to document this in a pricing sheet.

SUMMARISE (5 min)

Summarise by revisiting trainees' top 3 reasons for selection and transitioning into an online freelancing task.

Prep Work: Draft a résumé or profile and a proposal template or email to introduce themselves to potential clients.

Session 3: Landing an Online Freelancing Opportunity

Objective: To help trainees understand what happens after a proposal is selected, including client communication, project onboarding, and contract basics.

CONNECT (10 min)

Recap the first three steps. Ask trainees to share:
- Any jobs they applied for.
- Challenges they faced.

RELATE (10 min)

Draw on group experiences:
- What are the common difficulties in landing the first job?
- What worked well for others?

Create a list of best practices for landing the first freelancing project. Note that gender bias or stereotypes may impact client perceptions or hiring decisions. Developing strategies to highlight your strengths and professionalism can help counteract these biases.

LEARN (15 min)

Introduce the next steps.
- Step 4: Communicating with clients (emails, interviews)

Discuss how effective communication includes confidently asserting your rights and expectations, which can be especially important for women to ensure fair treatment and avoid exploitation.

- Step 5: Understanding project scope and setting expectations

Explain:
- Types of contracts: fixed vs. hourly.
- Payment terms and platform policies.
- What happens after winning a job (onboarding steps).

Resources for reference:
- Contracts: *Understanding fair working conditions* course on Atingi and *Using a Contract and Protecting Your Work* by Fiverr.
- Understand Your Market: *How to Research Markets & Sales Channels* course on Atingi.
- Rate-Setting and Proposal Tips: *How to Create Freelance Quotes and Proposals* by GoDaddy.

SUMMARISE (5 min)

Recap the session and prepare trainees for what's next.

Prep Work: Ask trainees to create a list of non-technical skills they think are important for success as an online freelancer (e.g., communication, time management, digital literacy).

Module 3: Key Skills for Online Freelancers

Objective

To equip trainees with the essential soft skills, financial skills, and digital competencies needed to thrive as online freelancers and succeed in platform work.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, trainees will be able to:

- Understand the importance of soft skills, financial literacy, and digital skills in the context of online freelancing.
- Identify relevant soft skills, such as communication, time management, adaptability, and client relationship management.
- Apply key financial concepts, such as budgeting, pricing, saving, and understanding taxation.
- Recognise commonly used digital tools and platforms for freelance work.
- Understand basic online safety, privacy practices, and intellectual property rights relevant to digital workspaces.

Module Outline

Session Topic	Activities	Materials Needed	Duration
Session 1: Essential Soft Skills	- Skills brainstorm, self-assessment, application to freelancing	Paper and pens (or whiteboard in online sessions)	55 min
Session 2: Financial Skills	- Income/expense reflection, budgeting, goal setting, pricing discussion	Paper and pens (or whiteboard in online sessions)	50 min
Session 3: Digital Skills and Tools	- Digital tool mapping, use cases, safety and privacy practices	Paper and pens (or whiteboard in online sessions), projector (for videos in offline sessions)	45 min
Total Duration			**2 h 30 min**

Table A.4: Outline of Module 3: Key Skills for Online Freelancers

Session 1: Essential Soft Skills

Objective: Trainees identify key soft skills needed for online freelancing and assess their current strengths and areas for growth.

CONNECT (10 min)

- Ask trainees: "What are the most important skills a freelancer needs to succeed?"
- Give trainees post-its or use an online whiteboard. They each write one skill.
- Group them as "soft skills" (like communication, adaptability) or "technical skills".

Be aware that women may undervalue soft skills they already use (e.g., multitasking, empathy). Encourage them to see these as professional assets.

- Ask: "Which of these are harder to learn online?" to prompt discussion on soft skills.

RELATE (5 min)

- Trainees reflect on a time when soft skills helped them succeed or when a lack of them caused challenges.
- Encourage sharing: "Have you ever had a misunderstanding with a client or coworker? What helped resolve it?"

LEARN (20 min)

- Introduce key soft skills for freelancers:
  - Communication (writing clear emails, chatting with clients)
  - Time management (balancing projects, meeting deadlines)
  - Adaptability (handling changing client needs or platforms)
  - Client relationship building
  - Negotiation
  - Growth mindset

Highlight that gender can affect how assertiveness or negotiation is perceived. Reframe these skills as strategies for self-advocacy and fair treatment.

- Share concrete examples:
  - A writer adjusting tone for different audiences.
  - A virtual assistant switching between tools based on client preference.
- Show brief clips or use examples from this video, ▶️ *Tips for Managing Your Focus and Productivity* by Upwork, to illustrate good habits.

REFLECT (10 min)
- Trainees complete a soft skills self-rating sheet (1–5 scale).
- They choose one skill to improve and write one action they can take in the next month (e.g. "Practise time-blocking").

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>
> Trainers were very intentional in talking about [gender-specific issues], allowing the entire class to give their ideas on them, especially through the opinions of the [women] in the meeting.
>
> **Georgette Martha**
> Trainee, *Online Freelancer Training*, Self-employed, Ghana

Some trainees, especially women, may rate themselves lower due to confidence gaps. Encourage honest reflection but also affirm growth potential.

SUMMARISE (10 min)
- Recap: "Your soft skills are often what clients remember most."
- Encourage free resources like LinkedIn Learning, Coursera, and YouTube for ongoing soft skills development.

Session 2: Financial Skills

Objective: Trainees gain awareness of key financial concepts—budgeting, setting rates, saving, and preparing for taxes—as freelancers.

CONNECT (5 min)

Ask: "When you get paid for freelance work, what happens next? Do you track it or spend it?"
Let trainees share habits or challenges—e.g., irregular pay, not knowing how to save.

Women may face greater pressure to prioritise family spending or may lack access to financial literacy. Validate diverse experiences openly.

RELATE (10 min)

In groups or pairs, trainees list 3 financial challenges freelancers face.

Expected responses:
- Variable income
- Unpredictable expenses
- Not knowing how much to charge
- Difficulty saving or paying tax

Ask: "Which of these have you faced, or seen others face?"

LEARN (20 min)

- Walk through a simple budgeting tool using a sample monthly income.
  - Introduce the 🔗 ***Monthly budget tracker*** by Microsoft (print or show sample).
  - Trainees complete their own budget estimates (income, fixed costs, savings).
- Discuss how to set freelance rates:
  - Hourly vs. project based.
  - Research market rates using sites like 🔗 ***WageIndicator***.
  - Consider costs (internet, software), time, and skills.

Women freelancers often underprice due to societal conditioning. Emphasise valuing time and skills fairly and show how to benchmark with confidence.

- Briefly introduce:
  - Importance of saving during "good months".
  - Taxes—depending on your country's regulations, freelancers may need to set aside tax payments.

Before the session, research the latest national tax rules and freelance income guidelines in your country. Use this information to explain local requirements clearly to your trainees.

  - Share 🔗 ***Labour Law around the World in Maps*** by WageIndicator as a visual tool.

REFLECT (10 min)

Trainees fill out a simple financial goal-setting handout:
- One short-term savings goal.
- One income goal.
- One change they will make this week (e.g., "track expenses daily").

Optionally, share free tools like Money Manager apps or Google Sheets templates.

> *Ensure trainees know their goals are valid, even if they seem small. Encourage goals that enhance autonomy and financial resilience.*

SUMMARISE (5 min)

- Reiterate: "Freelancers who manage money well stay in the game longer."
- Encourage trainees to continue learning via free content on YouTube or community finance groups.

Session 3: Digital Skills and Tools

Objective: Trainees explore essential tools for freelancing, identify gaps in their digital skills, and understand basic online safety and professionalism.

CONNECT (5 min)

- Ask: "What digital tool do you use the most for work or learning?"
- Create a quick poll or word cloud to show variety—email, YouTube, Canva, Zoom, etc.

RELATE (10 min)

- Ask trainees: "What do freelancers need digital skills for?"
  - Finding gigs
  - Communicating
  - Organising files
  - Submitting work
  - Upskilling

- Use icons or a mindmap to visualise the freelance digital workflow.

Consider that access to devices or digital spaces may be unequal, especially for women managing household roles. Invite discussion without judgment.

LEARN (20 min)

- Introduce common tools used by freelancers:
  - Communication: Gmail, WhatsApp, Zoom
  - File sharing and planning: Google Docs, Sheets, Trello
  - Portfolio building: Canva, LinkedIn, Behance
  - Learning and upskilling: YouTube, Coursera, Atingi.org (🔗 *Digital skills for gig workers*)
- Demo or show screenshots of one or two tools in use.
- Cover digital safety essentials:
  - Strong passwords and 2FA
  - Identifying phishing emails
  - Not sharing banking info on unknown platforms
  - Understanding copyrights—don't reuse others' work without permission
  - Knowing what personal data is shared and how to control it

Women are more likely to face online harassment or scams. Emphasise safety practices like guarding personal information and reporting abuse.

Identify low-bandwidth alternatives that trainees can use in regions with limited internet access.

REFLECT (10 min)

- Trainees use a self-check sheet to rate their comfort with different tools.
- Each chooses one digital tool they want to improve in and finds a free resource to start.

Some may downplay their existing skills due to confidence gaps. Frame digital growth as a learning curve, not a test of ability.

SUMMARISE (5 min)

- Recap: "You don't have to be a tech expert—but you need to be digitally confident."
- Encourage online peer learning groups to exchange tips.
- Reassure trainees that improvement is ongoing—pick one tool and grow from there.

Find more resources on specific skills for gig workers from the GIZ Gig Economy Initiative:

- Understanding fair working conditions
- Financial literacy for gig workers
- Soft skills for gig workers
- Digital skills for gig workers

Module 4: Managing a Competitive Profile
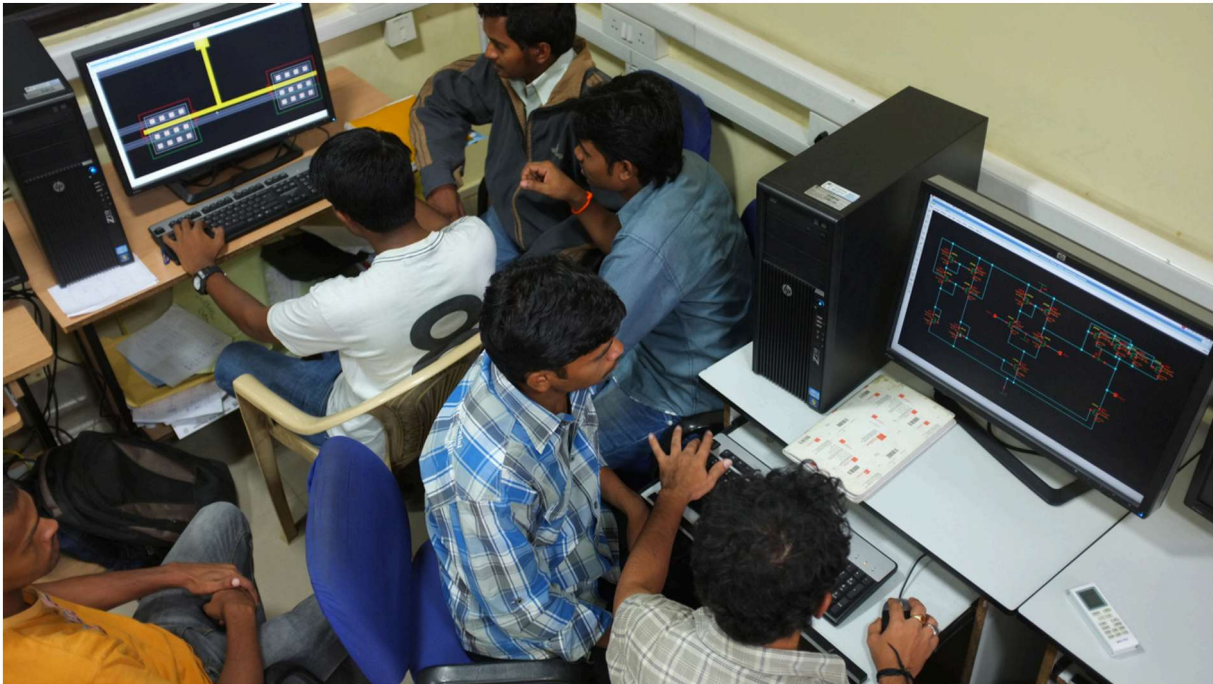
Objective

This module helps trainees build compelling online profiles, increase their value proposition, and compete successfully in the online freelancing market. It also guides them in developing a strong reputation and credibility through personal branding, networking, and effective use of platform features like ratings and reviews. Furthermore, it helps trainees explore the possibilities of transitioning from online freelancing into formal employment or entrepreneurship, using the principles of a growth mindset to guide decision-making, goal-setting, and long-term career planning.

As this part of the curriculum brings theory into practice, we recommend inviting an experienced online freelancer to join as a guest speaker during this module. Their real-life insights will enrich the learning experience and anchor the session in the realities of gig work. See the sub-section on *Expert Inputs – Gig Talks* for guidance on identifying experts for "Gig Talks"—brief, focused conversations with practitioners to make the programme more relatable and applied.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, trainees will be able to:
- Build an online profile that highlights their skills and strengths.
- List and market themselves effectively on digital labour platforms.
- Explore and prepare for a long-term freelancing career.
- Leverage their network and platform features (like reviews and ratings) to build a strong reputation.
- Learn from the experiences of a practising freelancer through a live "Gig Talk" and apply practical tips to their own freelancing journey.

Module Outline

Session Topic	Activities	Materials Needed	Duration
Session 1: Personal Branding – Creating a Competitive Profile	Group discussion, short lecture, peer reflection using a mind map	Paper and pens or online whiteboarding tool	60 min
Session 2: Building and Leveraging Your Network: Ratings, Referrals, and Reviews	Lecture, individual action list creation, class discussion	Paper and pens	35 min
Session 3: Building a Successful Online Freelancing Career	Group discussion, lecture, peer and self-reflection	None	45 min
Session 4: Transitioning to the Formal Workforce and Entrepreneurship – A Growth Mindset Approach	Group discussion, short lecture, goal-setting exercise	Reflection worksheets or blank paper	45 min
Session 5: Gig Talk	Guest talk, Q&A	Projector	45 min
Total Duration			**4 h 10 min**

Table A.5: Outline of Module 4: Managing a Competitive Profile

Session 1: Personal Branding — Creating a Competitive Profile

CONNECT (5 min)

Ask trainees to name individuals who are well-known personal brands (e.g., Oprah Winfrey, David Beckham). Encourage them to reflect on what makes these individuals stand out. You can include regional figures for stronger relevance.

Include a balanced mix of male and female public figures across industries to challenge gender stereotypes about success.

RELATE (10 min)

Introduce the concept of personal branding—the deliberate effort to create and influence public perception of an individual by positioning them as an authority in their industry. Discuss its importance for freelancers competing globally. Introduce the 5 As of personal branding:
- **Awareness:** Know your strengths and values.
- **Authenticity:** Be genuine in your representation.
- **Articulation:** Communicate clearly.
- **Appearance:** Present yourself professionally.
- **Association:** Build and be part of meaningful networks.

LEARN (15 min)

Walk through the essential parts of a standout freelancer profile:
- **Headline:** Keep it concise and skills-focused (e.g., "Detail-Orientated Data Labeller with 3+ Years of Experience").
- **Profile Picture:** A clear, friendly headshot with a neutral background (tip: smile and dress professionally).

Acknowledge that women may feel vulnerable showing their faces online—discuss optionality and strategies for safe, professional representation.

- **Intro Video (optional):** A 30-60 second clip introducing yourself and your skills.
- **Profile Bio:** Highlight your background, experience, and the value you offer.
- **Portfolio:** Showcase work samples with descriptions and outcomes.
- **Skills and Certifications:** Match these with what's in demand on the platform.

REFLECT (20 min)

Ask trainees to create a personal branding mind map. It should include traits, skills, goals, strengths, and unique selling points. In pairs or small groups, they present their mind maps and offer feedback. For virtual settings, trainees can use tools like miro.com or share handwritten maps on screen.

Some trainees, especially women, may struggle to 'sell themselves'. Encourage them to reframe it as communicating value, not boasting.

SUMMARISE (10 min)

Summarise how personal branding elements feed into building a profile on platforms like LinkedIn, Upwork, or Fiverr. Trainees can use their mind maps to draft their actual profiles after the session.

Session 2: Building and Leveraging Your Network: Ratings, Referrals and Reviews

CONNECT (5 min)

Recall earlier discussions on platform structures. Prompt trainees to name features they've seen related to community and reputation (e.g., reviews, badges, rating stars).

RELATE (10 min)

Discuss how networking in the digital space differs from traditional environments. Ask:
- How do freelancers connect with others online?
- How do they present themselves in conversations and collaborations?
- What are the benefits of referrals and community engagement?

LEARN (20 min)

Explain how ratings and reviews influence a freelancer's visibility and credibility. Algorithms on platforms often favour profiles with high ratings and consistent feedback.
- Share strategies to gain strong reviews: meeting deadlines, clear communication, and quality work.
- Emphasise joining freelancing communities or forums where trainees can exchange advice and find job leads.
- Encourage trainees to start building a small support network—former classmates, colleagues, or clients—who may become first endorsers or clients.

Discuss how unconscious bias can affect reviews. Encourage trainees to focus on building consistent quality and asking trusted clients for feedback. Share articles like 🔗 Approaching clients about feedback by Upwork with them.

Research and share region-specific digital networking communities to help trainees build a peer support system.

REFLECT (10 min)

Have each trainee write 5 actionable steps to boost their ratings and network. For example:
1. Respond quickly to messages.
2. Ask for feedback after each job.

3. Participate in platform forums.
4. Connect with 3 peers weekly.
5. Share learnings regularly on LinkedIn.

SUMMARISE (5 min)

Recap key points and assign trainees to define the word "algorithm", preparing them for Session 3.

Session 3: Building a Successful Online Freelancing Career

CONNECT (5 min)

Start by discussing trainees' definitions of "algorithm" and how it might apply to online work.

LEARN (20 min)

Explain how platforms function behind the scenes:
- **User Management:** Where freelancers register, create profiles, and manage accounts.
- **Matching Algorithms:** Systems that pair freelancers with job posts based on skills, past performance, and ratings.
- **Payments:** Secure systems for invoicing and transactions.
- **Ratings and Reviews:** Key trust signals used to evaluate performance.

Discuss tips for success as an online freelancer:
- Stay responsive and professional.
- Deliver quality work consistently.
- Continuously upskill through short online courses.
- Understand platform algorithms (e.g., frequent logins, keyword-rich profiles).
- Track your metrics—views, click-throughs, and conversions on your profile.

Point out how algorithms may reflect real-world biases, e.g., favouring those with early traction or certain demographics. Reinforce the importance of persistence and profile optimisation.

REFLECT (15 min)

Ask trainees to summarise all that they have learnt so far—about the freelancing world, setting up a profile, and managing work online. This can be done as a group reflection or by writing individual notes.

SUMMARISE (10 min)

Facilitate a final self-reflection:
- How confident do you feel about pursuing freelancing?
- What areas would you like more guidance in?
- What next steps will you take after the training?

Encourage trainees to set goals that match their values and context—not just industry expectations or popular advice.

Session 4: Transitioning to the Formal Workforce and Entrepreneurship – A Growth Mindset Approach

CONNECT (5 min)

Start with a quick brainstorm:
Ask trainees, "What could online freelancing lead to in the long term?" Capture answers like formal jobs, business ventures, consulting, mentoring others, etc.

Prompt: "Have you ever thought of freelancing as a stepping stone?"

Actively include examples of women in diverse roles—like tech entrepreneurs, creative freelancers, or female mentors—to broaden trainees' vision of what's possible.

RELATE (10 min)

Introduce the concept of the growth mindset—the belief that skills and intelligence can be developed with effort, learning, and persistence.

Contrast with a fixed mindset, where people believe talents are innate and unchangeable.

Before joining this OFT programme, I considered myself somebody who sought work, waiting for employers to hire me. After this programme, I realised that I am not just selling my skills but rather running my own business and solving different problems for my clients.

Sukadev Mallick
Trainee, *Online Freelancer Training*, Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, India

Discuss how a growth mindset is essential for:
- Adapting to new challenges.
- Scaling up as a freelancer or entrepreneur.
- Transitioning into formal job roles, especially those requiring collaboration and leadership.
- Embracing lifelong learning and professional development.

Acknowledge that women may internalise negative feedback more deeply due to social conditioning. Emphasise that abilities grow with effort, regardless of gender.

Share a few real-life examples of freelancers who went on to:
- Launch their own small businesses.
- Get recruited into formal roles by long-term clients.
- Offer coaching or start agencies of their own.

LEARN (15 min)

Explain possible pathways beyond freelancing:
- **Formal Workforce:** Clients offering long-term contracts, full-time positions, or referrals.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Setting up a small business, digital agency, or selling digital products.
- **Hybrid Careers:** Mixing freelancing with employment or education.

Mention that women often balance multiple roles (e.g., caregiving), so hybrid or entrepreneurial paths may offer flexibility—frame this as a strength, not a limitation.

Introduce mindset strategies to support this transition:
- Set long-term career goals and review them every 6 months.
- Seek feedback and use it constructively.
- Celebrate small wins and track progress.
- Embrace new challenges as learning opportunities.

REFLECT (10 min)

Distribute a simple goal setting/reflection worksheet (or ask trainees to fold a paper into four quadrants). Have them fill in:
1. Where am I now (skills, work habits, mindset)?
2. Where do I want to go (career goals)?
3. What skills or mindset shifts do I need to get there?
4. One action I'll take this month.

Trainees can share in pairs or with the group.

SUMMARISE (5 min)

Conclude by affirming that online freelancing is not an end point but a flexible platform for future success. Whether trainees aim for job security, independence, or impact, adopting a growth mindset will help them navigate each step. Reinforce that there's no single 'right' path—celebrate different aspirations, including those centred on autonomy, impact, or stability, which may resonate more with women.

Session 5: Gig Talk

This is a suggested structure for organising a Gig Talk session, where an experienced freelancer shares practical insights with trainees. You can organise one or two of these sessions as part of your training programme to inspire and inform your group.

WELCOME AND SET-UP (5 min)

Introduce the guest speaker and outline the objectives of the session.

GUEST TALK (15 min)

The speaker shares their journey, how they built a competitive profile, key lessons, challenges, and strategies.

Q&A SESSION (15 min)

Trainees ask questions about platform use, pricing, negotiation, red flags, etc.

PRACTICAL TIPS RECAP (5 min)

Ask the guest speaker to summarise the top 3 profile-building or proposal-writing tips.

REFLECTION (5 min)

Ask trainees to write down one insight or action they'll apply to their own profiles.

Module 5: Decent and Fair Working Conditions

Objective

To understand the rights and protections for online freelancers under labour law and what decent and fair working conditions mean. Trainees will get familiar with the Fairwork project, which promotes fairer work for digital platform workers.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, trainees will be able to:
- Define decent work and identify its key indicators, such as fair pay, transparency, and decent working conditions.
- Explain the five principles of the Fairwork project that guide fair treatment of freelancers.
- Research and know the minimum wage in their country.
- Identify common challenges freelancers face regarding payment and apply strategies to address them.
- Describe labour laws relevant to online freelancers in their country.

Module Outline

Session Topic	Activities	Materials Needed	Duration
Session 1: Introduction to Decent and Fair Working Conditions	Brainstorm decent work conditions; watch a Fairwork video; discuss key indicators and five Fairwork principles; group scenario work; session summary	Paper and pens (or whiteboard in online sessions), projector (for videos in offline sessions)	65 min
Mindfulness Break	Short mindfulness or stretch break	None	10 min
Session 2: Fair Compensation and Payment Practices	List payment challenges; discuss unpaid work and wage theft; share tips for negotiating pay; gather trainee feedback; session summary	Paper and pens	55 min
Total Duration			**2 h 10 min**

Table A.6: Outline of Module 5: Decent and Fair Working Conditions

Session 1: Introduction to Decent and Fair Working Conditions

CONNECT (5 min)

Start with a brainstorming activity: Ask trainees to list what they consider decent and fair working conditions for online freelancers. Examples could include fair pay, clear contracts, safe work environments, timely payments and the ability to raise concerns.

Prompt trainees to include gender-equal pay, protection from harassment, and inclusive language in their definitions of decent work.

RELATE (10 min)

Show the video ▶ *How fair are freelance and remote work platforms?* by Fairwork. This introduces real-world working conditions on digital platforms and sets the stage for deeper discussion.

LEARN (20 min)

Discuss the key indicators of decent work:
- Fair pay that reflects the true value of work.
- Transparent terms and conditions.
- Safe, healthy, and reasonable working conditions.
- Support and mechanisms to resolve disputes.
- Equal opportunities and treatment regardless of gender or background.

Stress how women, especially in male-dominated sectors, may face barriers like lower rates, biased hiring, or safety concerns.

Introduce the Fairwork project, which evaluates platforms based on fairness principles and advocates for better treatment of digital workers worldwide. The five Fairwork principles are:
1. **Fair Pay:** Workers should earn at least the local minimum wage after costs.
2. **Fair Conditions:** Work conditions must not expose workers to unnecessary risks or hardship.
3. **Fair Contracts:** Contract terms should be clear, accessible, and transparent.
4. **Fair Management:** Platforms should provide due process and mechanisms for workers to contest decisions.
5. **Fair Representation:** Workers should be able to organise and voice their concerns.

Trainees can explore platform rankings on the Fairwork website to see how platforms score against these principles.

Include country-specific data or headlines related to labour laws for freelancers, such as recent policy updates, minimum wage laws, or protections under the gig economy.

"

I learnt about clear contracts, intellectual property, work-life balance and recognition of freelancers as professionals.

Evans Kofi
Trainee, *Online Freelancer Training*, MJ Group Ltd., Ghana

"

REFLECT (20 min)

Divide trainees into small groups and provide each group with a scenario describing common freelancer challenges. Encourage trainees to reflect on how they would feel in these situations, and what strategies could help overcome them. Invite empathy-based discussion, especially around gender-related dynamics.

- **Scenario 1 (Gender Pay Gap):** A female data entry freelancer finds out a male peer is charging nearly double for the same kind of work. She realises she's hesitant to raise her rates, fearing she might lose clients.
  Discussion prompt: Why do you think this happens? How can she assert her value and negotiate fairly?

- **Scenario 2 (Undervaluing Work):** A survey-filling freelancer completes all assigned tasks accurately and on time. When she asks for her payment, the client claims the work wasn't "high quality enough" and offers half the agreed amount.
  Discussion prompt: What could she do differently next time? What systems or platforms can protect her from such situations?

- **Scenario 3 (Wage Theft):** A data labeller works on a long job with clear instructions. After delivery, the client deletes their profile and disappears without paying.
  Discussion prompt: How can freelancers reduce the risk of this happening? What support systems or community strategies might help?

Groups identify issues and suggest strategies to handle these, such as negotiating better, ensuring contracts, or using platform dispute processes (like Upwork's resolution centre).

SUMMARISE (10 min)

Summarise the key points of decent work, highlighting the importance of fair pay, clear contracts, and support mechanisms. Reiterate that fairness includes addressing systemic gender bias and ensuring women feel empowered to negotiate and report unfair treatment. Emphasise that while labour protections for freelancers are still developing, awareness of these principles and fair practices helps protect their rights.

Session 2: Fair Compensation and Payment Practices

CONNECT (10 min)

Facilitate a discussion listing payment challenges freelancers commonly face:
- Competing with low-priced freelancers.
- Difficulty estimating correct pricing.
- Fraud or wage theft by clients.
- Hidden fees, such as platform commissions, currency conversion costs, or internet expenses.

Ask whether women face specific pricing challenges—like feeling less confident to negotiate—or if they've seen gender-based underbidding.

LEARN (20 min)

Explain unpaid working time—time spent on unpaid tasks like applying for jobs or maintaining profiles. Discuss wage theft, which includes non-payment, late payments, or underpayments. Reference definitions and prevalence from trusted sources like WageIndicator.

Highlight that women may experience additional unpaid labour (e.g., emotional labour, over-delivering to prove worth). Normalise charging fairly for all professional input.

Offer practical tips for freelancers:
- Always discuss and confirm payment terms upfront and in writing.
- Negotiate confidently for what you're worth—don't let gender bias influence pay.
- Stay informed about your country's minimum wage (e.g., WageIndicator's database).
- Understand local taxation rules for freelancers.
- Use platform rating systems and freelancer communities to screen clients.

REFLECT (30 min)

Collect feedback on the training experience, and confidence level through questions, such as:
- Rate the training and your confidence applying it (scale 1–10).
- List key insights and skills you gained.

- Describe how you plan to apply what you learnt.
- Do you feel confident asserting your value and negotiating fair compensation regardless of gender? Why or why not?
- Are there any cultural or personal barriers that make this more difficult for you?
- Request any additional support or topics of interest for future training.

SUMMARISE (5 min)

Recap the main payment challenges and reinforce key strategies for ensuring fair compensation, such as clear communication and awareness of legal protections and minimum wages. Reinforce that knowing one's worth includes recognising—and pushing back against—any gender bias that undervalues one's work.

> Before, I didn't have the full knowledge of the power of [...] the gig economy [...], but [...] now I am aware of the rights of an online worker and how to navigate [...] my activities as a gig worker.
>
> **Peter Rawlings**
> Trainee, *Online Freelancer Training*, Digital Opportunity Trust, Kenya