

IMPROVING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP PROJECTS THROUGH INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Introduction

Many people are involved in active citizenship projects because they feel a need to contribute to the community they live in. These projects range from food campaigns to teaching older people how to use digital technology, and they are often organised and sponsored by schools, youth or community groups.

Building an Active Citizenship Project

Having a desire and an idea to help are the first step to building a successful active citizenship project. The second is learning how to organise such a project and utilise effective tools and methods.

All projects require the following basic planning steps:

- *Describe the project* – What is the problem you want to tackle and why is it important? Make links into the community to see if there is agreement on it and what solutions might work. Use this feedback to inform and shape your project. This information is important if you want to involve others or if you need to seek funding for it.
- *Bring awareness to the project* – It is important that other people know what the problem is, why it's important and how your/their actions could help. Make sure to involve those you intend to support – this is vital throughout your project.
- *Develop a plan of action for the project* – Answer the how. How will you execute the project? How will your actions make a difference?
- *Communicate with people helping or contributing to the project* – All projects need support from others. In the digital age, this means implementing the right information communication (ICT) tools.
- *Evaluate the project* – You need to understand how effective the project is as it progresses. How can you measure how successful the project has been? What data supports the need for the project and how well the actions taken successfully address the problem?



ICT Tools You Might Use

A basic understanding of which information communication technology tools best suit a project can be the difference between failure and success:

- **Blogs:** an abbreviated term for weblog, a blog is a website that features information that can be shared by individuals involved in a project or the general public. Blogs allow users to access information, comment on it and share it.
- **Websites:** the basic definition for a website is a collection of webpages containing information - text, images or video - for the purposes of communicating an idea on the web. For active citizenship projects, a webpage is effectively 'mission control'. All aspects of the project are housed here - purpose statement, goals, management, operations, participation, funding info and successes.
- **Text messaging:** active citizenship organisations use text messaging for internal communication and to get the word out about events and actions taken.
- **Social networks:** these enable users to communicate with each other by posting information, making comments and sending messages, images and video. A social network differs from a website in that it does more than just present information. It allows users to contribute new information and comment on information provided as well as produce and publish content / graphics etc. into the social network.
- **Online storage:** online storage facilities supply 'cloud storage' services that gives you easy access to your documents and project files at any time and any place for anyone involved in the campaign or project. All you have to do is drag a file or folders, and it syncs across all your devices.
- **Infographics:** visualising and sharing ideas and data online has never been easier with many free programmes available for non-designers to visualise information. Whether you want to break down a complex idea using charts and images or just want to highlight some main points, infographics are quick visual summaries that catch attention in bite size visual formats.
- **Audio-visual aids:** AV aids may involve the sense of vision as well as hearing. It is usually used in presentations, multi-media production and for broadcasting online (such as through podcasts or 'self-made' video media channels). AV production has become increasingly important as a tool for learning as access to media production facilities have increased dramatically through the proliferation of mobile phone technology and use, and only through more traditional audio-visual broadcast media channels (TV) and equipment (typically specialist and high in cost).



Note: there are many more examples. Does the group have any ideas of more digital tools for change?