

Improving the Active Citizenship Project Through Information Communication Technology

Introduction

Many students in schools across the country are involved in active citizenship projects because they feel a need to contribute to the community they live in. These projects range from food drives to teaching senior citizens how to use digital technology, and they are often organized and sponsored by schools.

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 organize a project and utilize effective tools and methods. All projects require the following basic planning steps:

➤ Describe the project.

What is the problem and why is it important? Reach out to the community to see if they agree that 1) this is a problem and 2) there is a need for a solution. Let their feedback inform your project. This information is important as you begin to organize, and funders and volunteers will want it as well.

➤ Bring awareness to the project.

It is important that other people know what the problem is, why it's important and how your actions will help. People who experience these problems will need to know you are out there with an idea on how to help.

➤ 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 help—people to work directly on the project and funds to support it. You need to get your message out to people who can do either or both. 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

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 mission control. All aspects of the project are housed here—purpose statement, goals, management, operations, participation, funding info and successes.

➡ **Text messaging:** Text communication on a digital device, most often a mobile phone. Active citizenship organizations use text messaging for internal communication and to get the word out about events and actions taken.

➡ **Social networks:** Social networks are dedicated websites that 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.