

## **Innovation Into Action grant final report - Getting On-Line CD Rom**

### The project

This Innovation Into Action Grant project researched into where there was local, free or cheap Internet access for tenants throughout England. The survey included community based outlets, and not just government agencies, so the details collated, was information that was not currently available in one format. The information was then collated and transferred onto a database that listed availability via local areas. The database was produced on to a CD Rom and distributed to tenants throughout England.

The project was over two years with the second year being to produce and disseminate an updated version of the CD Rom.

The project started in September 2002 and ended in August 2004.

### How it came about

Since 2000, TPAS had had a dedicated member of staff funded by a lottery grant to set up and run an interactive web site. Part of this work included providing training for tenants on website usage and promoting the website at events throughout England. Through discussions with tenants it was apparent that many tenants were extremely interested in accessing the Internet, but their main problem was, because the majority could not afford to have a computer in their own homes, where could they get the access they required?

This need also linked with the Government's own Policy Action Team 15 report on Information and Communications Technology, which highlighted the same need for residents in socially excluded areas. The PAT report recommended that all tenants should have access to the Internet by April 2008 but recognised that 'People who live in deprived neighbourhoods are less likely to be able to use the most common methods of training or points of access to ICT'. These people would need to know where they could gain such ICT access and this project aimed to plug this gap.

The TPAS Information Manager talked informally with Innovation Into Action (IIA) and was encouraged to bid for a grant. She went through the process of pre-application and formal application stages and the bid was accepted.

The overall cost of the project was £17,598 plus VAT over the two years.

### The process

A standard proforma was developed so that all replies could easily be entered on to database and be in the same format. The proforma asked for contact details, times of opening, any cost and any specific facilities or software for people with disabilities.

Staff surveyed all public libraries, tenants federations, resource centres, cyber cafes, local authorities and Registered Social Landlords, on-line learning centres and Councils for Voluntary Services for information.

Press releases were also sent to all housing and community and voluntary journals and e-zines, highlighting the research and asking for relevant organisations to contact the TPAS Information Service.

The cyber cafes' and UK online learning centres' contact details were researched on-line and these contacts e-mailed with the survey form. All other organisations were mailed the survey.

A database developer was employed to design the database and to work with staff and tenants to make sure the right reports that tenants wanted could easily be listed and printed from the database.

All the proformas were collated and then a temporary admin worker was employed to input the details on to the database.

4000 copies of the database were produced on a CD Rom.

The CD Rom was then disseminated through TPAS events, enquiries to the Information service and adverts placed in relevant community journals and websites. Organisations who had replied to the survey were also offered a copy.

The whole process was repeated asking for amendments to existing information on any new contacts and the revised CD Rom was produced in August 2004.

In order to conform to data protection laws, all mailing labels were purchased from the relevant organisation's national body and used only the once. So these costs had to be repeated in the second year.

The work involved in collating the on-line e-mail information gave TPAS a list of contacts that can now still be used for promotional mailings.

### What went well

The surveys were staggered over 6 months, so that staff had the capacity to do the mailings and deal with the information and enquiries that came through to the office on a regular basis. This worked extremely well.

At one point, mailing labels were delayed because they were out of print, but all this meant is that another mailing came to the fore that month until the mailing labels were delivered for the next mailing.

All the CD ROMs had been distributed by April 2004, which fitted in nicely with the need for a revision.

The contact with other community and voluntary organisations and public libraries has proved invaluable. Their feedback and response to what we were trying to achieve was extremely encouraging and quite a number of organisations asked for listings to disseminate out through their own networks and also asked for permission to upload the CD Rom on to their own websites, so our dissemination of the information has stretched even further than we thought it would.

### What went wrong

There was nothing that we could say went wrong with the project, though some issues did come up, which we highlight below and give advice on.

### Issues that came up

The costs of the CD Roms for the second year were a good deal more expensive than the first year. The supplier blamed this on a wrong estimate for the first year, rather than inflated costs for the second. As we used the same company for both the database development and CD Rom production, by the time we found out about these extra costs, there was little we could do.

Staff underestimated the number of new and amended surveys that would be returned in the second year. This number was as much, if not more, than the first year. We think that organisations who chose not to reply the first time round, on seeing the CD Rom, realised the benefits to them of being on it, and so replied the second time round! The IIA grant included administration costs for the second year for data entry, so the extra replies were still absorbed into these costs.

We underestimated the staff time when dealing with database developers, temporary workers etc. We did expect increased enquiries but underestimated the number of organisation that chose to reply via e-mail or telephone.

### What the grant paid for

For each year the grant paid for: -

- Costs of postal surveys
- Costs of e-mail surveys
- Cost of database production
- Costs of CD Rom productions
- Costs of mail outs of CD Roms
- Cost of advertisements and promotional flyers
- Administration costs
- Cost of temporary data entry worker

The second year costs did not include actual database development costs, but did include costs to amend the database for better ease of usage.

## Exit Strategy

The revised CD Roms will be promoted similarly to the first year, and they will be disseminated as widely as possible. Although there will be no longer any budget to produce CD Roms again, we still have the database and will continue to update and amend the information on it, as this is given to us or as we find out details from our own research and information collating.

We will continue to answer enquiries to the information service in relation to local listings and can easily print out local listings for any area in England to send to anyone requesting this information.

We will continue to promote the directory on our website and will look at linking the database to our new website we are developing, which will be on line in the autumn of 2004.

If you want any further information, please contact: -

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