Technology Together Pilot
Lessons Document

Technology Together is a collaborative project between Age UK and YouthNet to develop an intergeneration model that uses young volunteers to help older people develop their knowledge and understanding of what is and how to use technology, in particular computers and the internet. Age UK and YouthNet were chosen as the Virgin London Marathon Charity of the Year 2013 on the basis of this project.

The project has run in two pilot areas and this document forms part of the evaluation of the pilot projects. This document presents the lessons that can be taken from the two pilot areas. These lessons are based on what has worked well and what has not worked well; it is not simply a representation of issues within the pilots.

Application Process

- The process needs to be clearly set out with a consistent use of language; an Expression of Interest is not viewed the same as an application. The former may be viewed as a set of ideas and the latter as a worked through plan for delivery whose resource implications have been thought through.

- The team that will be delivering the project on the ground need to be directly involved in the drafting of the application, so that the application submitted is consistent with what is deliverable

- The roles and responsibilities for the different parties involved within a project should be set out at the application process, so that expressions of interests and / or applications are based on a clear expectation of what support and information will be provided to and by whom. The details can be worked out at a later stage but what is important is the understanding of what will be expected from and by the different parties involved in the project

Embedding In Period

- There needs to be a period between the awarding of the funding to Local Age UKs and when they begin delivering a project. This period, suggested by the pilot areas to need to be around three months, is required to build the infrastructure to deliver the project[1]. Although resource required for delivery can be identified (and form part of the application process) the pilot areas have made clear that infrastructure cannot be put in place ahead of any funding being awarded because of the risk that they are unsuccessful in winning the funding.

- The embedding in period will also provide the opportunity to build working relationships between parties involved in the project, work through contractual issues, share and agree specific issues from branding, publicity material and data collection requirements for monitoring and evaluation purposes. The need to have these agreed and in place before delivery of a project begins is crucial and integral to a successful launch of a project and the embedding in period provides the room to have this completed in a partnership environment.

Induction

- The induction should be spaced out over a period of time and not delivered in one day. This would provide the opportunity to compartmentalise issues so that specific sessions focus on specific issues, and parties can take things away and digest them before having to commit to decisions and actions.

- Inductions do not all need to include parties coming together in person; webinars or other approaches can be used to accommodate other commitments that may prevent people getting together. However, it is important for building relationships that people do get together, and so the first induction session should involve

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[1] In the Technology Together pilots infrastructure included building partnerships, purchasing equipment, marketing and awareness raising and setting up classes and events

getting everyone in one place; approaches for future sessions should be based on judgement as to the most appropriate approach to be used.

- Inductions should involve two way dialogues; all parties should feel that they have had the opportunity to contribute and that what their have said has been listened to and taken on aboard.

- Induction sessions should be set out as part of the application process and a condition of awarding funding should be the mandatory attendance of parties to the sessions; dates and times set out as part of the call for applications presents a clear expectation on those applying for funding

Contracts

- A judgement needs to be made on how best to contractually bind partnerships; whether it is contracts, memorandum of understanding or grant agreements these need to be agreed and signed with weeks of funding awarding decisions being made. It is important that the *wording* is agreed and shared amongst all parties so that everyone sees the relationship as a partnership, but the failure to have something in place will delay building up the infrastructure (thus hindering the possible success of the project) and foster distrust between parties. Clearly set out expectations (including roles and responsibilities) as part of the call for applications should help mitigate issues of disagreement.

Marketing Material

- Marketing material should be finalised before projects begin delivery, so that they can be used to raise awareness. Marketing materials (where appropriate) should be developed in partnership and led by the appropriate partner[2]

- It is important when different organisation are working in partnership that branding guidelines are developed and agreed; this does not mean the same branding designs for the recruitment for young and older people but an agreed understanding of what types of designs to be used for what audiences

Recruiting Young People

- The roles of local Age UKs and YouthNet in recruiting young people should be clearly set out before a call for applications. YouthNet should be responsible for recruiting young people and local Age UKs should be responsible for helping YouthNet develop relationships with local organisation working with young people[3]

- YouthNet should make at least one (if not a few) site visits to local Age UKs to understand the locality of the organisation, audit and develop links with organisations within those areas working with young people and understand the operations of that particular local Age UK and their needs in terms of volunteers.

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[2] YouthNet should lead on the development of material to recruit young people; Age UK and local Age UKs should work in partnership to develop material to recruit older people. All three parties should be involved in developing a communications plan.

[3] Recruitment of young people should be within a reasonable locality of classes being delivered; if part of the aim of intergenerational projects is to provide opportunities of younger and older people to meet to help build a stronger community younger people need to come from the same community as older people (i.e. travelling from Manchester to the Wirral on a 19 mile journey is not using young people form the same community as older people)

- YouthNet should have a dedicated resource to work directly with the delivery team at local Age UKs, building a working relationship and co-ordinating young people volunteers

- Local Age UKs should be clear with YouthNet on the requirements for young people; such as when young people need to be available but they also need to take up the opportunity to try different approaches if the availability of young people is different to the existing delivery of technology classes

Recruiting Older People

- Local Age UKs need to develop a clearly strategy for recruiting older people that is more the simply what they may have been doing; the need to be innovative is crucial to find those older people who are not within reach of the local Age UK or simply refuse the need to learn new technology

- Local Age UKs should have a dedicated resource to mange their technology (together) programme; co-ordinating classes, liaising with YouthNet and Age UK, raising awareness etc. This person should be competent with technology and be comfortable with troubleshooting technological issues

- Age UK should provide examples of different approaches that have been used and facilitate contact between different organisation to help local Age UKs to understand how different approaches can be used

Programme Management

- It is important that a project has a clear set of *singular* objectives that have been agreed by and bought into by all parties involved in a project via the programme

board. The programme board should consist the key figures from relevant organisations who are responsible and have the authority for making decisions[4].

- The project should be based on best practice programme and project management techniques (e.g. the programme board should have terms of references clearly setting out its responsibilities and level of authority to make decisions, a project initiation document should be developed and signed-off by the programme board, responsibilities for decision making and channels of communications should be clearly set out)

- The project should have a clear process for collecting information to monitor and evaluate the project that should be agreed before the delivery of the project begins. It is important that processes in place are practical and do not change during the course of the project, and that information is only collected that is required. Resources should be put in place to monitor and evaluate the project.

- Resources should be put in place to have a project manager to oversee the delivery of the project; this resource should be focused on the delivery of the project (which includes monitoring and evaluating the project, along with disseminating the findings) and have the required delegated authority and access to resources to ensure issues are resolved, mitigated or flagged up to the appropriate people

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[4] For the technology together pilot the programme board would consist of people from YouthNet and Age UK; the relevant people is for the two organisations to decide based on the remit of the programme board