

USING INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY FOR INCLUSIVE VOLUNTEERING

Information and communication technology (ICT) can be used in a variety of ways to support individuals with disabilities and others in participating in volunteerism. **This fact sheet will provide suggestions for areas where your organization can use ICT as a way to provide more inclusive volunteering opportunities and promote engagement in meaningful activities.**

DID YOU KNOW?

- Digital files (e.g. audio and video) are easily transformed into multiple modes formats using technology. for example, spoken words in a video can become text captions
- Digital text documents are flexible and can transform to meet the needs of users. For example, text can become braille, can be enlarged, can change colour and can be read aloud by screen reader software
- Many current technologies (e.g., computers and smart phones) have built-in accessibility features which can be easily explored through free online guidebooks
- By moving more tasks to the computer you create more opportunities for others to help from any location with a computer
- A computer can be used by someone who cannot move a mouse or use a keyboard
- Often, simple interfaces and tools such as Google Docs are the most inclusive because they are easy to use, flexible, and (nearly) ubiquitous
- Reliable and free, web-based text, voice and video communication software is available

HOW CAN TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT AN INCLUSIVE VOLUNTEERING ENVIRONMENT?

Small changes in your marketing and communications materials, document preparation, approach to communication, conceptualization of task requirements and policies can improve your organization's ability to recruit, retain, and best engage diverse, skilled volunteers.

STRATEGIES FOR MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION MATERIALS

- Check that your web site meets **web- content accessibility guidelines (WCAG)** using free site checkers such as www.achecker.ca or <http://wave.webaim.org/>. Strive for level AA or AAA compliance
- If you produce your own videos, use free **captioning and description software** to make your videos accessible. Visit <http://www.dcmp.org/learning-center> to learn how and try free captioning and description software such as MAGpie (http://ncam.wgbh.org/invent_build/web_multimedia/tools-guidelines/maggie) or on Google's You Tube (<https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2734796?hl=en>)
- Not all social media is accessible for people with disabilities, so be sure to place critical information (e.g. event cancellations or changes) on your accessible website
- Get familiar with third party accessible interfaces like Easy Chirp for twitter (www.easychirp.com) and location of accessibility information for social media sites such as Facebook, Google+ Hangouts and YouTube if you want volunteers to use these tools

Think about inclusion and accessibility when you use information and communication technologies. An accessible website lets volunteers learn about your organization and can show that you are inclusive.

STRATEGIES FOR RECRUITMENT

- Enable volunteers to **apply online** through your accessible website or via email
- State on your web site that you provide opportunities for volunteers to **work from home or off-site**. Clearly state if access to a computer and/or the Internet is required
- Make sure that your application form is in an accessible digital format that can be completed on a device such as a computer. You can learn about making accessible Word and PDF forms at <http://adod.idrc.ocad.ca/>
- Most individuals who do not use social media know someone who does. Use social media to reach a broad audience for your recruitment campaigns, even if you think your target participants do not use it
- **Network with disability service organizations** in your area and ask them to help you reach people on their listservs, newsgroups, social media and email list

STRATEGIES FOR TRAINING

- Convert training materials to accessible digital formats
- Augment face-to-face training with a **remote online training** option. Tools such as Skype and Google+ Hangouts can enable real-time and video capacity
- Use web-based training materials and communication as a way to **enable volunteers to learn at their own pace. Ensure information is presented in different ways (visuals, text, auditory)**
- Create simple training videos and use tools such as Google's auto-caption tool on YouTube to make your video accessible. Make sure that any important visual information is described in the audio or in video descriptions

STRATEGIES FOR TASK ASSIGNMENTS

- Review tasks and job descriptions and denote which tasks may be carried out completely or partially using information and communication technology (ICTs). Enable virtual volunteers and volunteers who are most enabled by ICTs to carry out these tasks
- Create an **online task check-out list** to support flexible time commitments and enable your volunteers to learn about and select or "check out" tasks when they are able to complete them
- Use cloud-based collaboration, storage and sharing tools to enable individuals who are willing to use these technologies to work together and share documents virtually from remote locations

STRATEGIES FOR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Develop an **accessible technology procurement policy** that requires any software or media purchased by your organization be accessible and inclusive
- Develop a policy to train staff **to produce accessible digital documents** even when the intended recipient does not have a disability. Digital documents live beyond their original use and may one day be utilized by an individual who requires alternative access

When your organization makes accessibility, willingness to accommodate and inclusion an expectation rather than an afterthought or inconvenience, you enable diverse participation and enable volunteers to serve without having to first self-advocate for inclusion.

BY UTILIZING THE ABILITY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES TO FOSTER FLEXIBLE, REMOTE AND COLLABORATIVE WORK, YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN FURTHER SUPPORT INCLUSIVE VOLUNTEERING.