

How to run your ULSG?

Ensuring communication among ULSG members between meetings

Keeping a project moving along requires good communication, both when the group is meeting face-to-face and between meetings, so careful thinking about complementary activity is recommended. URBACT projects are by nature about finding ways for people, often in different languages or countries, to work together effectively. For most Local Support Groups, members will be in the same partner city, but these tools will still be useful. Take advantage of the huge potential offered by innovations in online and remote collaboration.

LSGs members should agree protocols for communicating at the outset, including communication methods, frequency and confidentiality. For instance:

Telephone

When is it acceptable to use mobile numbers? Are people prepared to have their phone numbers circulated? Can teleconferences be used in place of some meetings? (see 'Teleconferencing Tips' opposite).

Email

Most straightforward way of communicating but danger of overload. Group software (social networking or project management) may be better.

Internet

Can it generally be assumed that all those involved will have access to the internet, the ability to use search engines and the capacity to read and produce documents in Microsoft Office software? Training and induction will often be needed for new online tools and ways of working.

Online collaboration

New online facilities for networking (see 'Methods' box, opposite) are constantly being developed. Partners should not be afraid to experiment but should rely on tried and tested approaches when deadlines approach.

Online file storage

Create an online library of shared documents for people to access (e.g. Google Groups or Yahoo Groups are two free, easy-to-use versions).

Project management software

Can reduce email traffic, provide forum space, host documents in central location and manage tasks (e.g. Zoho projects, Basecamp, Project Pier)

Skype

Free or cheap calls for teleconferencing by internet. Programme needs to be installed on all computers (administrator access often required) and may require some familiarization.

Teleconferencing

Simple to use, and can be useful at all stages.

Online training platforms

To create / access training modules online.

Web 2.0 tools

Includes a range of new tools for sharing material and working online:

- Online forums and networking sites
- Crowdvine (for bookings and agendas for meetings)
- Delicious (for bookmarks)
- Flickr (for photos)
- Slideshare (for powerpoints)
- Surveymonkey (for online surveys)
- Weblogs and blogs (for opinion & news)
- Wikis (for editing and libraries)
- Youtube (for videoclips)

Agree appropriate protocols and levels of privacy – for example by asking permission before publishing potentially embarrassing photos on the internet or other details such as mobile phone numbers and email addresses!