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1. Dissemination plan

Every organisation must develop a dissemination plan to explain how you will share project outcomes and learning with stakeholders and the community. Dissemination is essential for take-up, and take-up is crucial to the success of the programme and sustainability of outputs in the long term.

Project plan

As part of the overall project plan, you must develop a dissemination plan and report on results in progress reports and in the completion report. The dissemination plan will explain how the project plans to share outcomes with stakeholders, relevant institutions, organisations, and individuals, and contribute to the overall dissemination strategy for the programme.

The dissemination plan will explain:

- What you plan to disseminate – the message
- To whom – the audience
- Why – the purpose
- How – the method
- When – the timing

Purpose

All dissemination should have a purpose, and support or inform project development in some way.

The purpose of the activity may be to:

1. Raise awareness – let others know what you are doing
2. Inform – educate the community
3. Engage – get input/feedback from the community
4. Promote – ‘sell’ your outputs and results

First think about what you want to achieve. You may want to announce the project’s inception, highlight a specific result or finding, or get early feedback before going on to the next stage. Then think about what the project will gain from it (e.g. raise your profile, gain support, or get input to influence future project work).

Message



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Think about the key message you want to send. It's often useful to think of the person on the receiving end. What do they need to know about your project? How can you communicate it clearly before they delete your email, throw away your brochure, or nod off during your presentation?

- Focus on clear, simple messages that are easily understood
- Get the right message to the right audience. You can send the same message to different audiences, but make sure it's relevant to each one
- Coordinate messages within and across programmes. Messages from a group of projects often have greater impact than messages from a single project.
- Don't build up unrealistic expectations at the start of the project

Audience

Think about who you want to reach and what they can do for your project. Identify the different individuals, groups, and organisations that will be interested in what you're developing, particularly with respect to take-up at the end of the project. The stakeholder analysis identified people who will be affected by your project and whose support you need. Use dissemination to inform and engage stakeholders, and get them to buy into your work.

Consider the following audiences:

- **Internal** (e.g. your institution and/or the project consortium) – They supported the project bid, so keep them informed about what you're doing. Use dissemination to make sure the project has a high profile and they buy into what you are developing.
- **LLP and other programmes** – Share your results with other projects, within the programme and across programmes. Programme meetings (and cluster meetings) are an excellent opportunity to share what you've done and get feedback from projects doing similar work or facing similar problems and issues.
- **External stakeholders** – Think about who might take up your outputs and the stakeholders that can help you to 'make it happen'. These might be teachers, researchers, librarians, publishers, online hosts, etc. Think of opportunities to engage with them like conferences.
- **The community** – There may be much to share with the wider education and research communities. For example, guidelines, methods, evaluation criteria, questionnaires, and what you learned generally. Think about who could learn from your knowledge and experience and share it in case studies, journal articles, etc.

Methods

There are a wide variety of dissemination methods. The trick is to select the right one(s) to get your message to the target audience and achieve your purpose. Here a grid with some advices:



Project planning: Dissemination methods

Method	Purpose	Hints and tips
Institution newsletter	Awareness Inform	Use the institution newsletter to announce the project, give regular updates, develop a profile, and get buy-in. Be creative. For example, include an interview with your project ‘champion’, some quotes from end users, or praise from an external evaluator. Make sure they know the project is a success.
Project website	Awareness Inform Engage Promote	Your project website is one of the most versatile dissemination tools. Put plenty of information there for different audiences. Add to it regularly so people keep coming back. Sell the project and engage the community.
Press releases	Awareness	A press release is a formal announcement to the national press. It takes skill to write a press release and get it to the right media.
Flyers/brochures	Awareness	Though much communication is electronic, it is still often useful to create a flyer that can be circulated in printed form (e.g. to hand out at conferences or to colleagues at your institution). The electronic version (e.g. PDF file) can also be circulated electronically.
Programme / cluster meetings	Engage	Programme (and cluster) meetings are excellent opportunities for projects to learn from each other, discuss common issues, and get feedback on their work. You may be asked to give a presentation, participate in a workshop, give a demo, etc. Many projects will be on the agenda, so make an impact and engage the audience.
Conference presentations	Engage Promote	National and international conferences are an important opportunity to share your achievements with experts in the field (e.g. teaching/learning, learning technology, etc). Make sure you have something to say, select conferences where it will have an impact, and ones that will attract the experts you want to impress.
Conference posters	Engage Promote	A poster session at a conference may be more appropriate when you have work in progress. You write up your work in poster format, and present it to delegates who attend the session. It may not be as glamorous as doing a presentation in the auditorium, but it’s an excellent way to practice engaging people, gauge their reactions, and get one-to-one feedback.
Workshops	Engage	Workshops are small interactive events held to achieve a specific objective. A workshop could be used to get feedback from users on a demo or to get feedback from experts on a particular issue. Though there may be an introductory presentation to set the scene, the emphasis is on discussion to inform future development.
Demonstrations	Engage	Demonstrations allow you to show what you’ve developed and get feedback. Demos are useful early in the project to get feedback from stakeholders on functionality, usability, and look-and-feel. Consider a demo for stakeholders at your institution to keep them informed about what you’re doing and to help with buy-in.
Online discussion lists	Awareness Inform Engage	As the name suggests, email lists are useful for discussing new developments, problems, and issues. They are an opportunity to be proactive and reactive, share your learning with the community, and develop a profile for your project. Email lists are also useful for making announcements (e.g. an achievement, something new on your website, or an event you’re holding).
Journal articles	Inform	Any and every opportunity should be taken to get articles published about the project. Consider peer reviewed journals in relevant disciplines near the end of the project when you have data and results to report. During the project you may



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		want to contribute to electronic newsletters. Make sure you send a copy of any publications to the programme manager and post them on your website.
Case studies	Inform	Case studies explain what you did and what you learned so others can benefit from your experience. A case study could be very valuable to others building something similar. Ask your programme manager about organisations and websites collecting case studies in your area.
Reports and other documents	Inform	You may be preparing reports on specific topics. Post them on your website so they are accessible to a wide audience. Think of anything your project has developed that may be useful to others (e.g. guidelines, methods, evaluation criteria, toolkits, or questionnaires).

Timing

Decide when different dissemination activities will be most relevant. Messages will vary during the timeframe of the project. For example, at the start focus on awareness of your project, and at the end on ‘selling’ achievements. Also think about the time commitments of your target audience. There are periods in the academic year when it will be difficult to reach e.g. academic staff (e.g. at the start of the term or during examinations).

Collaboration

The dissemination strategy will ensure that the programme has a high profile, the community learns from its achievements, and outputs are embedded and taken up. The programme manager will share the strategy with you early in the project and invite you to contribute ideas. Where the programme is structured by clusters, the clusters will be asked to brainstorm about ways to collaborate on dissemination. Thinking early in the programme about the ‘big picture’ will maximise the impact of dissemination and the sustainability of its outputs

You will be asked to participate in programme and cluster dissemination activities. There are very selfish reasons for doing so. Firstly, initiatives at programme and cluster-level often have more impact than those at project-level. Colleagues in the field are more likely to attend a cluster workshop than a project workshop. Secondly, it’s cost effective. Contribute your ideas on collaboration and participate in the activities that are planned.

Language

Your project may be developing something that’s technically difficult and complex. You can send the same messages to different audiences, but use appropriate language for each audience appropriate for the target audience, and non-technical language where possible. This is particularly important for dissemination to stakeholders. They need to know what you’ve achieved and why it’s important. If you’re writing a piece for the institution newsletter, focus on clear messages in non-technical language that teachers and administrators will understand. If you’re writing an article for a computer journal on the design and architecture of your system, use technical language and bring out the flowcharts and schematics.

Evaluate success

In planning the purpose of a dissemination activity, you decide what you want to gain from it. Try to build an evaluation component into any major dissemination activity to see if you’ve achieved

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your purpose. For example, if you invite people to visit your website, check the usage logs. If you hold a workshop, hand out a short questionnaire to find out what participants thought of it.

Project web page

All projects within some programme must create a web page.

Structure for writing your project web page:

- Title of project
- Background
- Aims and objectives
- Outcomes
- Main contact person with Address, Telephone, Fax, Email
- Other project staff and contact details (where applicable) – this part is optional

Project website

The project website explains aims and objectives and disseminates information about project activities and results

The project website is an important and versatile dissemination tool. It will inform the community about your project, findings, resources you have created, and what you have learned. As a dissemination vehicle, it should include any publicity the project has created, journal articles, other publications, and presentations at conferences. For some projects, the website is also a mechanism for making your deliverables available (e.g. digitised images or other collections of content). Think of what else would interest and engage the people who will visit the site and attract visitors (e.g. reports, designs, models, evaluation criteria, guidelines, demos, questionnaires, etc).

You should put your core project documents on your website. As a minimum, put the project plan and final report online. Progress reports are also useful, as this lets other projects know where you are, and they can learn from how you're dealing with problems and issues.

There are further resources on guidelines for creating project websites. However, projects should note the following hints and tips:

- Make it attractive and easy to use, with intuitive navigation
- Keep the website up to date
- Submit the website to key search engines so it gets lots of traffic
- Ask key websites on similar topics to link to yours
- Use a link checker and make sure there are no broken links
- Make sure it follows best practice in accessibility for disabled users
- Mention that the project is funded by some programme (e.g. LLP).