STUDENTS

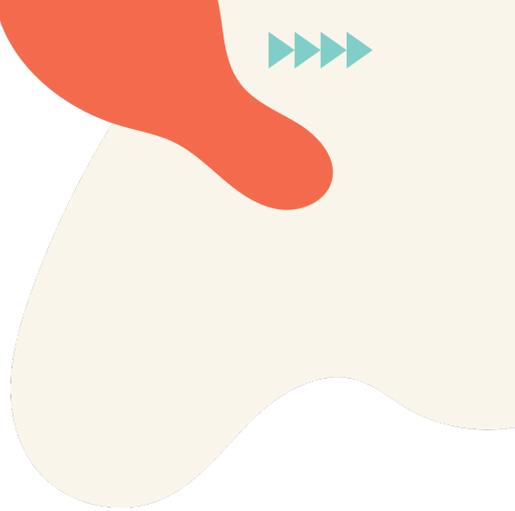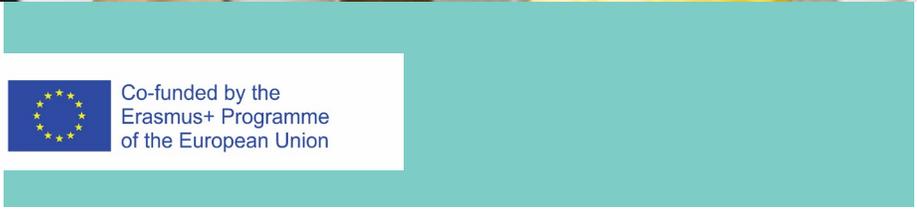## AS DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGERS

SDCE OERs Module 3:

How to set up a Digital Civic Engagement Project

Module 3

So, let's get into the technicalities of how to set up a Digital Civic Engagement Project. You will learn about the components of great digital civic engagement projects, how to get involved and how to use technology to get the very best results. You will also be inspired by wonderful examples of Digital Civic Engagement Solutions.

Topic 1: What Do Great Digital Civic Engagement Projects Include?

Topic 2: Getting Involved In Your First Digital Civic Engagement Project/ Initiative

Topic 3: Using Technology To Enhance Your Civic Engagement Work

Topic 4: Designing/ Delivering Digital Civic Engagement Solutions

Module 3 Exercises

A note on the terms we use

Before we start your Civic Engagement journey, we need to explain what some of the abbreviations are that we will use throughout these Modules.

HEIs- Higher Educational Institutions.

SDCE- this is the name of the project that created these materials.

DCE- Digital Civic Engagement

The Guide to DCE- this is a guide surrounding information about Digital Civic Engagement and students. You can find a link to the toolkit here

The DCE Toolkit- Our Student Digital Civic Engagers' Toolkit is designed to teach you about relevant digital tools that you can use for your own civic engagement.

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WHAT DO GREAT DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS INCLUDE?

Learner level: Beginner

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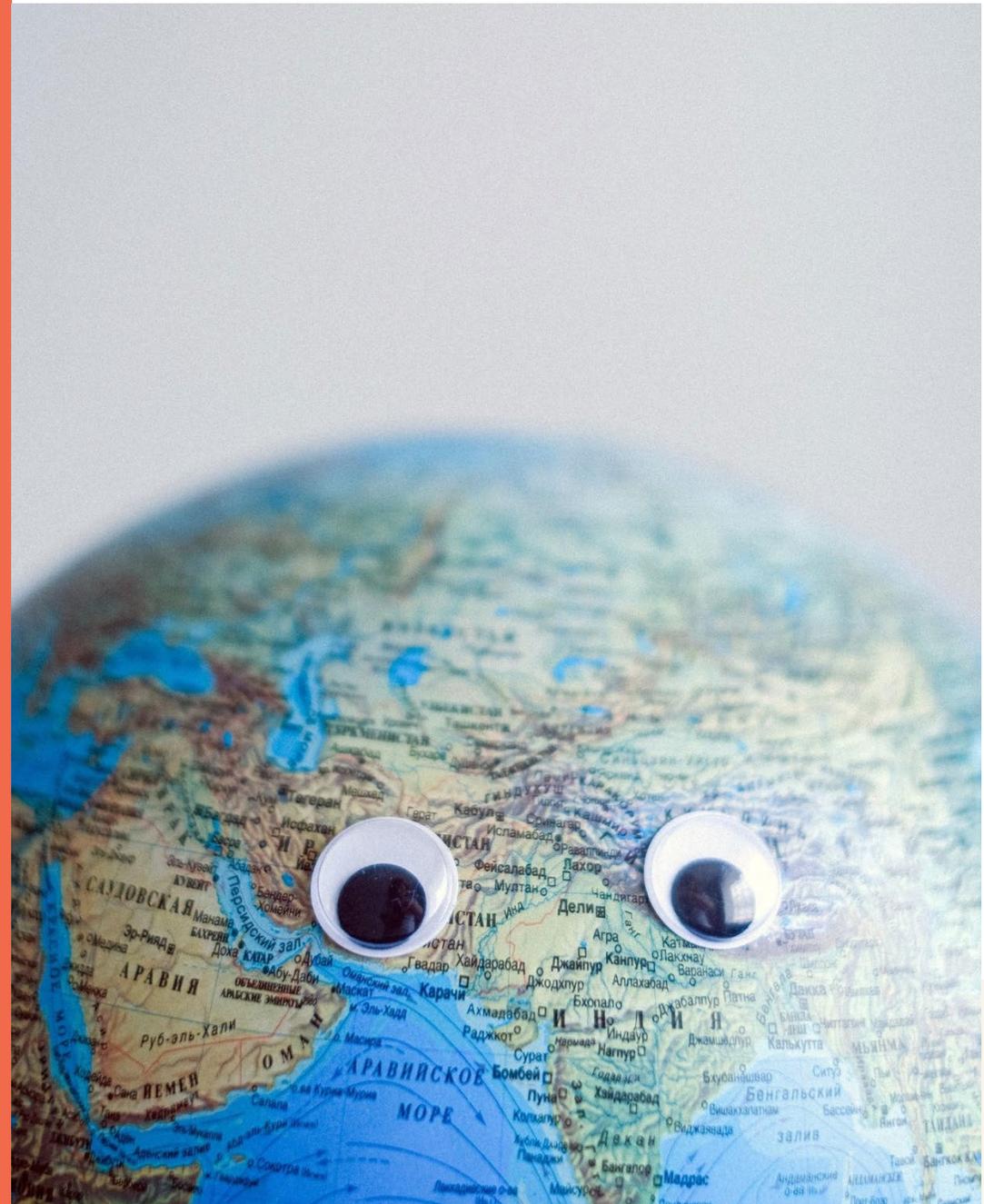
GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT THE STARTER PROGRAM

The Starter Program at the University of Tartu was an extracurricular activity for students which seeks to develop an entrepreneurial mind-set and spirit in students.

Financed by EU Social Fund, it was a three-month long idea-development program which involves a kick-off event, several training sessions and workshops, a networking event, mentoring sessions and a demo day.

The programme seek to attract students who want to experience the process of coming up with an idea to launch a product or service.

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT THE STARTER PROGRAM

The programme sought to attract students who want to experience the process of coming up with an idea to launch a product or service. During this process the students explored the problems in community and tried to develop solutions.

In the Starter Program, the student teams worked independently on their ideas to solve or find a solution for certain problems using different digital communication channels.

Quite often they ended up with new digital tools or solution and took care of the implementation to a specific community need.

Link to the case study in the Guide to DCE

TYPES OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The following are concepts that will help to ensure that your DCE project will be the best it can be. You will learn about

- Direct Service and Community Research

- Advocacy and Education & Capacity Building

- Political Involvement and Social Responsibility

- Philanthropic Giving Participation in Association

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DIRECT SERVICE AND COMMUNITY RESEARCH

Direct service is where personal time and dedication is given to help address community needs. An example of this could be volunteering to help clean litter up from an area of your town.

Community research entails exploring a community to learn about its assets and how it is affected by current social problems. Examples of community research might be having discussions with local people to gain a better understanding of what needs to change in your community.

Source

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ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION & CAPACITY BUILDING

Advocacy and education is where your team educates the community about issues it might be facing. Examples of this might be organising petitions, protests or writing letters in order to convince corporations or governments to change.

Capacity building identifies the strengths of a community, and works on these in order to create a stronger problem-solving network to help community issues.

[Source](#)

POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Political involvement is where you actively encourage others to participate in active citizenship. Examples of this would be encouraging people to register to vote, or campaign for political causes.

Social responsibility ensures that all actions professionally and personally impact the project and community in a responsible and positive way. An example of this could be a food waste collection service that redistributes unwanted food to those who need it.

Source

PHILANTHROPIC GIVING AND PARTICIPATION IN ASSOCIATION

Philanthropic giving ensures that resources are given to those who need them. This can be funding for different projects, donating needed items or even participating in fund raising events.

Participation in association occurs when you involved with different community projects and businesses. This gives you the necessary networks to ensure that your own DCE project will become a success .

Source

READ – OUR EXTRA RESOURCES

Illinois State University provides different description of practices of civic engagement:

1st Digital Parliament first initiative done through teams

Digital Health Forum à digital initiative held by the European Youth Parliament

Example for inspiration about what (digital) civic engagement projects may include

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02 GETTING INVOLVED IN YOUR FIRST DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT/ INITIATIVE

Learner level: Intermediate

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LISTEN

Firstly, listen to the following podcast- a discussion of the opportunities and benefits to becoming involved in a civic engagement project.

Empowering students through civic engagement:

https://open.spotify.com/episode/24xx6GJiM7Iq1Fw698T45U?si=06a6380e0071415f

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS TOWARDS YOUR DCE PROJECT/INITIATIVE

From the first two modules, you have seen how to identify a problem in your community, and how to find solutions to these problems.

The next step is to gather a group of like-minded people and instigate change. Formulate a plan on how you will create the needed change. Will you join an existing project, or create your own?

A DCE project that involves students as participants generally is student led or university led.

IS YOUR DCE PROJECT GOING TO BE STUDENT LED ?

1. Student led DCE projects are where the students are the main project organisers and are key in making the decisions for the DCE project.

2. Lecturer or university led projects will be led by a third level institution and will involve the students to contribute to civic engagement activities. However, the key responsibilities of the project will be within the third level institution.

Find out more in our Guide to DCE

STUDENTS AS DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGERS

HOW TO GET INVOLVED WITH DCE

Throughout our case study research, we found that there are several ways that students can become engaged in a DCE project:

- Mandatory participation.
- To help volunteer for a cause.
- For participants to gain experience in relevant skills.
- Out of necessity to fix a problem.

Source

MANDATORY PARTICIPATION

Mandatory participation occurs when a student has to become involved within a DCE project as it is part of the course that they are studying.

This approach varies from institution and country, but generally students who had to participate on a mandatory basis did so as part of a module of a course.

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TO VOLUNTEER FOR A CAUSE

Many students will volunteer to help a cause and that will be their reason for joining a DCE project. Volunteering can take many different forms and depending on where you live, there can be a lot of different ways to volunteer.

Some students want to volunteer to help people and better their community- whereas other students volunteered to meet new people and for the experiences.

Source

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FOR PARTICIPANTS TO GAIN EXPERIENCE IN RELEVANT SKILLS

Another reason that students get involved in a DCE project is the relevant skills and competencies that are developed when one participates in a DCE project. These skills are relevant to both the student in the future and for their personal development.

We have seen in Module 1 and 2 of these OERs that many competencies from the EntreComp and DigiComp frameworks are developed when a student is civically engaged.

[Click here for a link to the EntreComp Framework](#)

[Click here for a link to the DigiComp Framework](#)

OUT OF NECESSITY TO FIX A PROBLEM

Another primary reason that students may want to partake in a DCE project is to fix a problem that they have recognized in their community.

Within our SDCE research, we found that some DCE projects were developed to help students find solutions to problems.

HOW TO START A DCE PROJECT

Once you have decided on your reasons for joining or starting a DCE project, you need to work out next what opportunities are available to you either locally or through your University.

If there isn't a DCE project near you that suits your requirements, think about starting your own one!

Source

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CREATING A DCE PROJECT FROM THE BEGINNING

For many students, there might not be very many opportunities in civic engagement, and you would like to create your own project rather than join an existing one. But how does a student do this?

Firstly, don't be afraid to ask for help! Find a group of like-minded people who have the same passion as you- it will help to ensure that the project is a success!

Similarly, ask lecturers or your Student Union for advice too. Find out more on the next page!

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FINDING PEOPLE THAT CAN HELP

Similarly, you can also ask around your university for advice too! A lecturer who might be involved in a different Civic Engagement project might be able to give you some tips on how to get started in your university. They may be able to connect you to other lecturers which have expertise in the field that you have chosen.
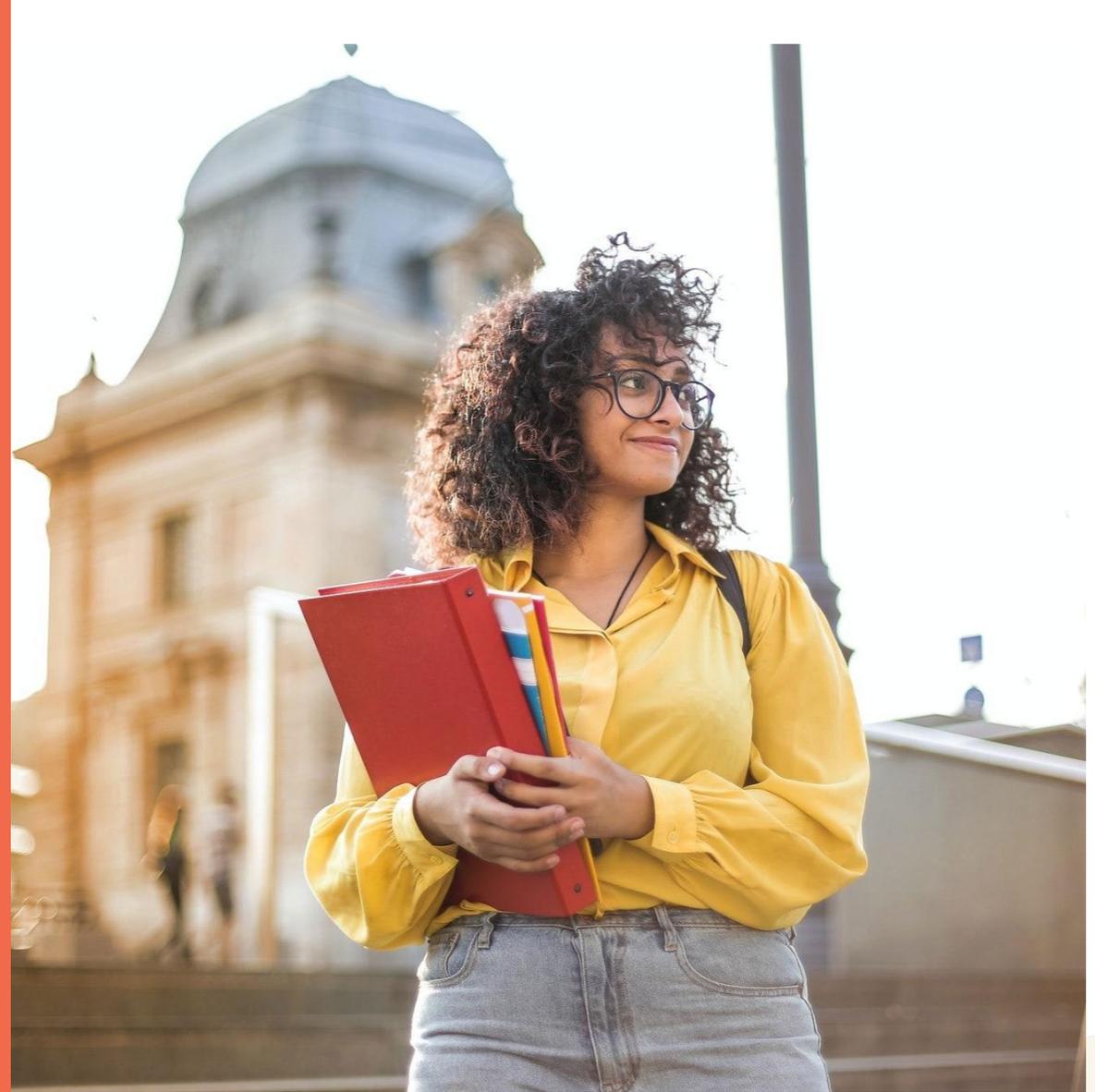
Your local Student's Union should also be able to help you. They will be able to highlight local opportunities that might already be available, and they may help you to connect to like minded students.

STUDENTS
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Source

JOINING A DCE PROJECT AS A VOLUNTEER

You may want to become involved in an existing DCE project to see what it is like!
Your University may have existing volunteering programs available- ask around your University to find out what you can do!

You can also search online to find out what volunteering opportunities may be available to you. For example, Ireland has an excellent volunteering database which highlights opportunities within different regions.

Check out I-Vol, Ireland's national volunteering database by clicking on this link
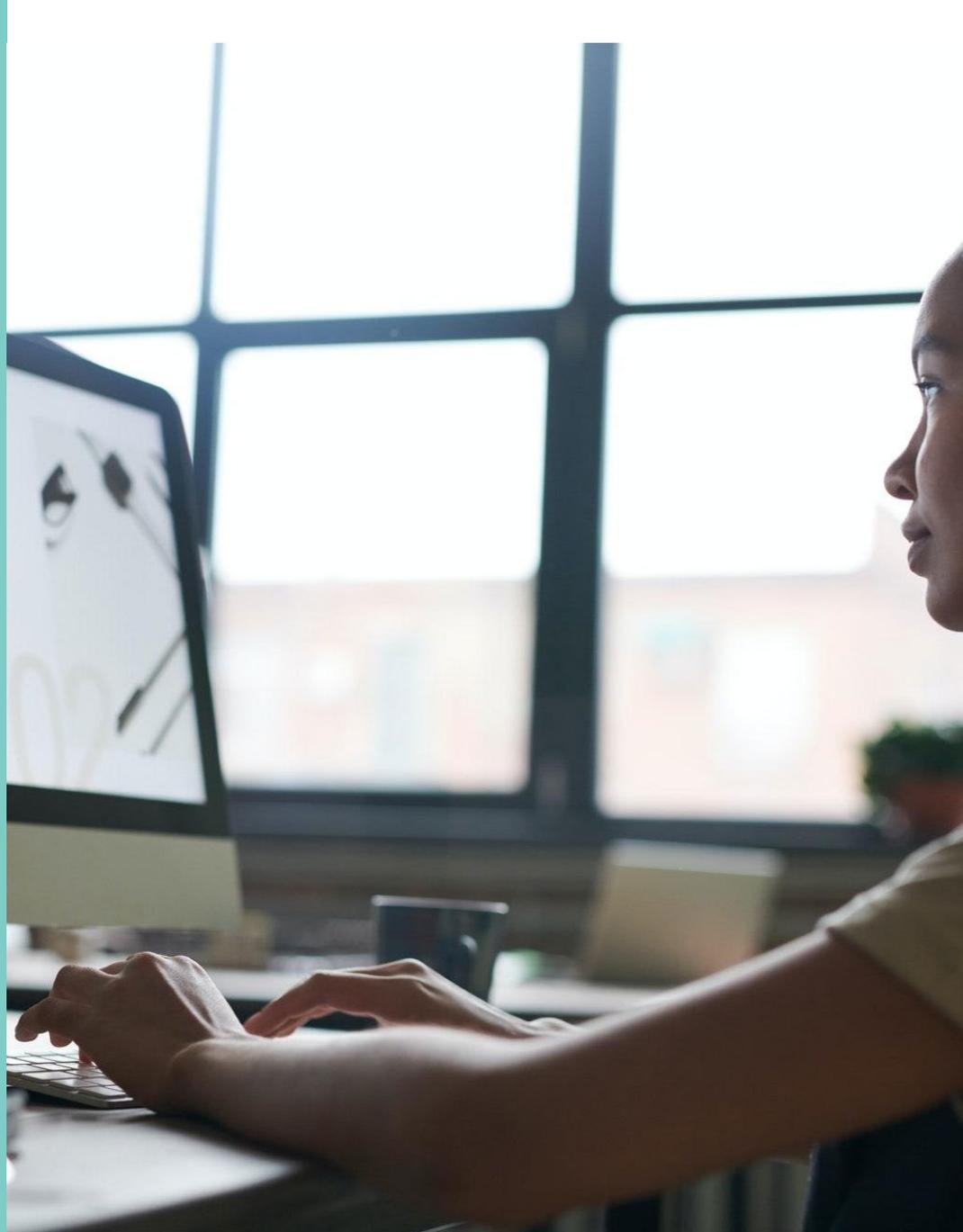
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JOINING A DCE PROJECT AS IT IS MANDATORY

Finally, you may also join a DCE project as it is a mandatory part of the course you are studying.

While this may mean that you do not get much say in how and why you are joining the project, it will also give you much experience that will allow you to build your own DCE project from this experience.

Similarly, joining from a mandatory will also enable students to gain contacts that may help them set up their own DCE project.

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Source

EXTRA RESOURCES

Check out this CivicLabs article for ideas on how to become civically engaged

Need ideas on what to do for a Civic Engagement project? Click here for some inspiring examples.

03 | USING TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE YOUR CIVIC ENGAGMENT WORK

Learner level: Beginner

STUDENTS
AS DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGERS

INCLUDING TECHNOLOGY IN YOUR DCE PROJECT

Once you have established who is leading your DCE project, and you understand the reasons that you are partaking in the project, it is important to work out how you might use technology to help aid your project.

Technology can assist us in many ways with regards to our DCE project, from finding new ways to meet or host your meetings to covering angles such as marketing.

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USING TECHNOLOGY TO FIND LIKE MINDED PEOPLE

There are many tools and platforms that you can use to find people who are like minded and that have similar passions to you. Social media platforms allow us to find like minded people through groups or pages. Curious on how you might start? Try looking for community groups on Facebook, focusing on pages or groups that are in your locality.

If you can't find anything local, try extending your search to a key cause that interests you.

STUDENTS AS DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGERS

TOOLS TO CONNECT

Take a look at the following tools that can be used to help link up like-minded people.

Meetup:
Meetup is a tool where you can meet people with similar interests, both in a professional and casual manner. You can choose to join a group, or you can find events you are interested in. Can't find a group that matches exactly what you are looking for? Try making one!

Check out Meetup's website here:
https://www.meetup.com/

Source

TOOLS TO CONNECT

MeetMe:

MeetMe is an app available for Android and iOS that enables people who have similar interests to be able to communicate with one another.

It consists of a live chat service so that you can speak to people who are nearby who have the same interests as you do.

Check out the website for MeetMe here:

https://www.meetme.com/#home

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COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Once you have met some people who you are interested in starting/ partaking your DCE project with, you will need to connect with them to organize the project and conduct meetings.

Explore the following apps to help get a good idea on what you might use to have online conversations with your teammates.

These digital tools can also be used to host meetings with community groups, brainstorming sessions and more.

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COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Zoom
Zoom is a video-chatting tool. Zoom can be used to conduct online meetings, as well as host online lessons. Users can also brainstorm on a virtual white board and collaborate on projects by annotating documents on other students' screens. Link to the website.

Facebook Live
Facebook live is a tool that can let the user live-stream video through a Facebook Page or Group. This can be used for recording gatherings, events, performances and lessons.
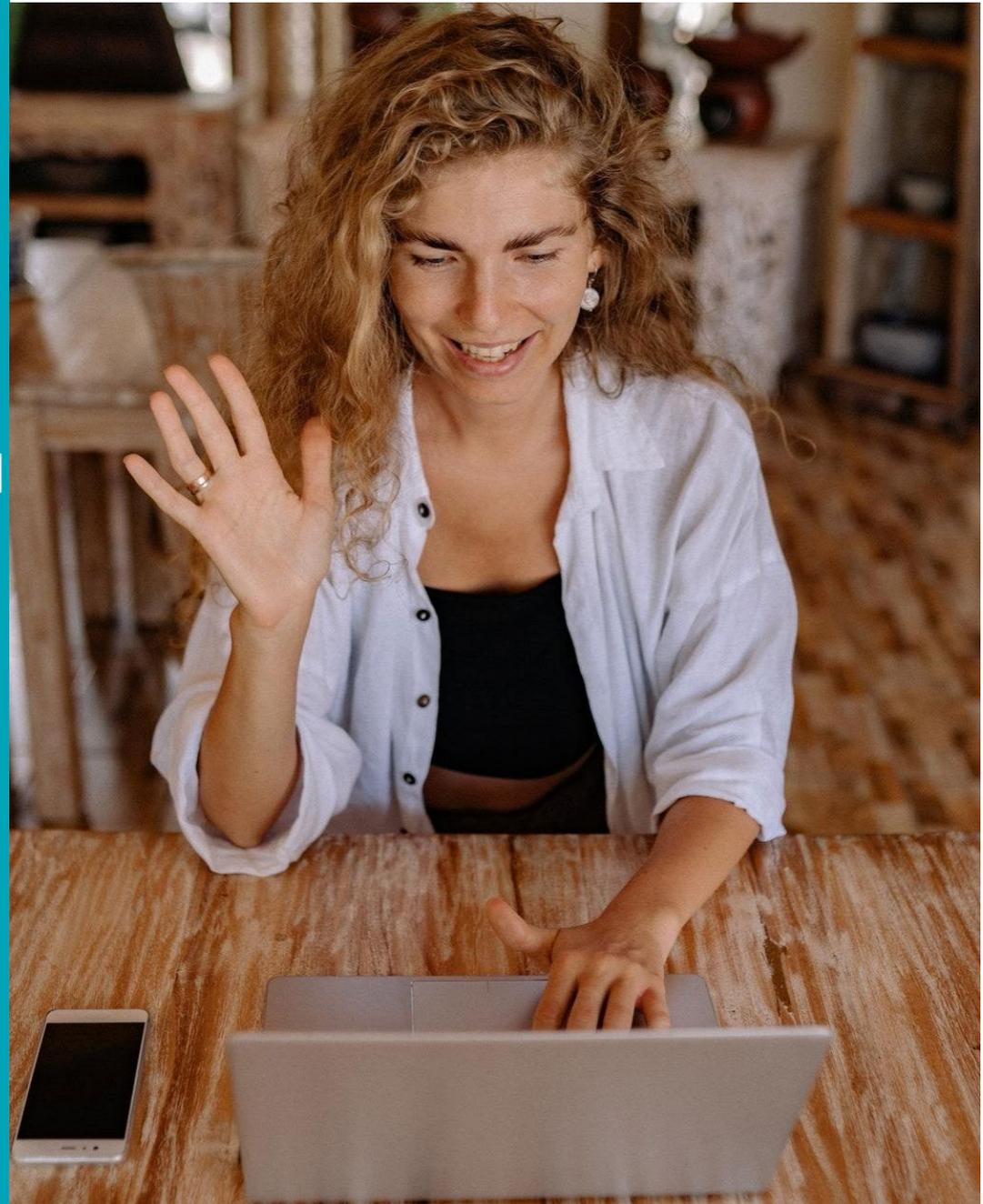
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COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Webex:

Webex is an online tool that enables users to have online conversations with up to 100 participants Webex can be used to communicate via voice or video call. It can also be used to screen share, or to share documents between people.

Webex is considered an inclusive software, offering equal experiences for everyone regardless of geography, language, or communication style.

Click here for a link to the Webex website
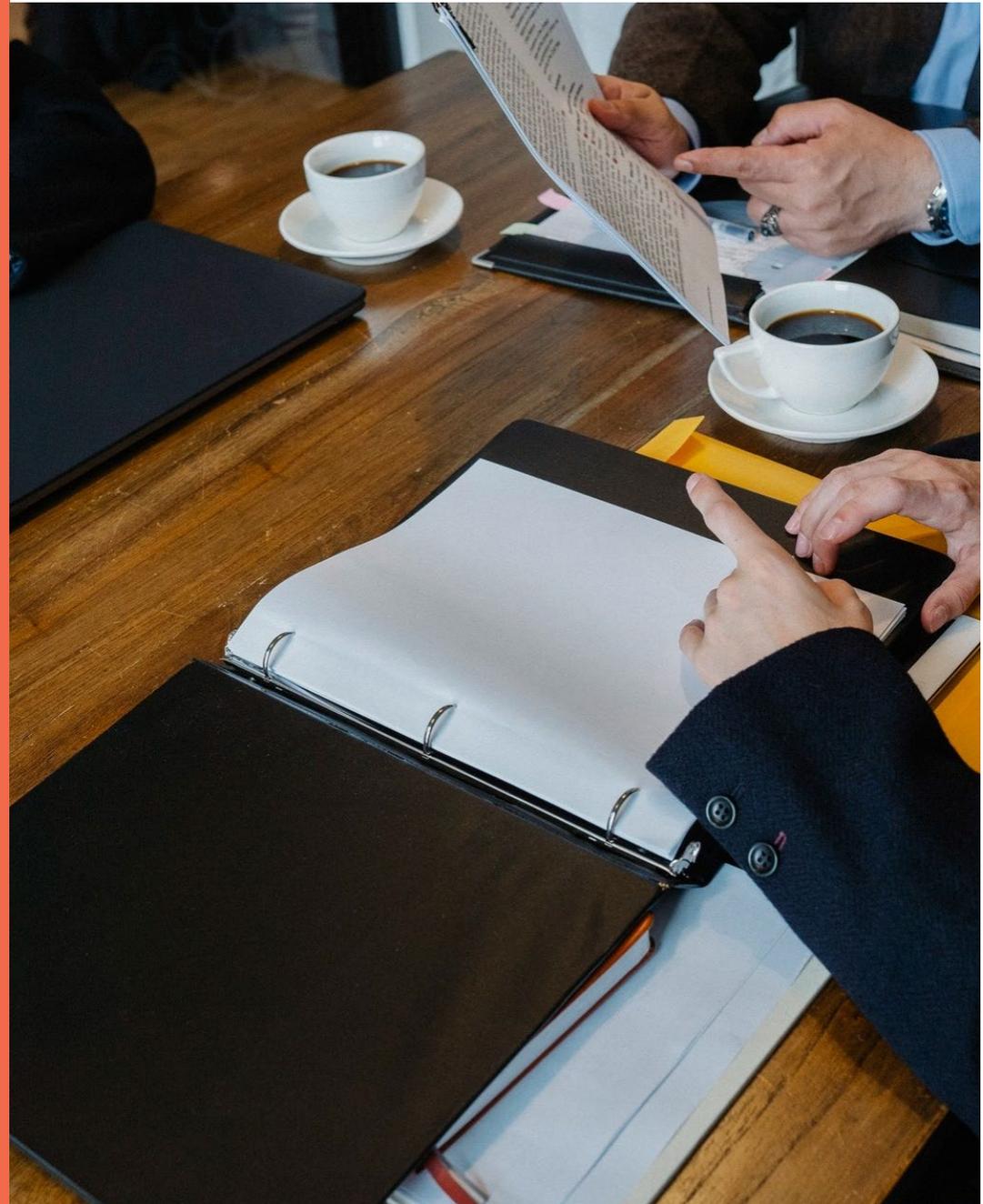
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PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Project Management tools enable people to organize, plan and manage projects in a simple and effective way.

Project management tools will help you to make sure everyone is up to date with what needs doing, as well as what process of your Civic Engagement project you might be on.

There are a lot of different types of project management tools out there- you will have to decide what suits your project the best.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Trello:

Trello allows users to create boards, lists and cards which enable you to keep your projects organised.

With each board, you can share items from many different sources, such as blogs, websites and news articles giving your users accessible information-fast.

Trello can be used as a free version too!

Click here for a link to the Trello website

Source

PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Microsoft Teams:

Whilst Microsoft Teams may not initially be thought of as a project management software, it is a platform that gives its users a hub for teamwork. Teams uses channels rather than file folders and uses chats instead of emails. This change to the usual way of working in a team allows for each team member to access and work on the same files at the same time.

Click here to find out more about Teams

THE DCE TOOLKIT

Within this section, several different digital tools have been introduced. But did you know we have an entire Toolkit as part of the SDCE project?

The DCE Toolkit is an excellent resource to help give you some ideas on what tools to use and when- it also contains some inspiring tools that have been used to help local communities throughout Europe.

For more information on the DCE Toolkit click on this link

Resources

[Check out this article on how to use technology in Civic Engagement](#)

[Take a fresh look at our guide to DCE](#)

[Take a fresh look at our DCE Toolkit](#)

04 DESIGNING/ DELIVERING DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

Learner level: Beginner

STUDENTS
AS DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGERS

DCE CASE STUDIES AND DIGITAL SOUTIONS

Within this topic, we will take a closer look at a key case study that we compiled as part of our research for The Guide to DCE.

The case studies have been explored frequently throughout these Modules. In this section we will identify how these examples of Civic Engagement utilized digital technology whilst providing a solution to a civic engagement issue.

ALLOWING STUDENTS TO CREATE SOLUTIONS TO CIVIC PROBLEMS

Earlier in this Module, we examined the STARTER programme offered by the University of Tartu in Estonia. The programme seeks to attract students who want to experience the process of coming up with an idea to launch a product or service.

Covid has had a massive impact on the world, and the students at University of Tartu designed solutions to issues that Covid had presented. But what are some of the ideas that students came up with?

Click here for a link to STARTER

SOLUTIONS PROVIDED BY THE STARTER PROGRAMME

Some of the solutions that were identified:

- A robot for picking strawberries (as farmers could not rely on getting workers due to covid restrictions)

- Software for connecting elderly people at care homes with volunteers and loved ones

- Interactive 3D models to simplify event planning etc.

- An application for understanding how to sort waste (a major problem in society)

THE SORTER APP

Using your own expertise to help find solutions to civic issues is often a fantastic way to create solutions. This was the case in the STARTER programme when SORTER was developed.

One of the key students behind this solution was studying waste management, and they recognised that people often were unsure of what materials should be disposed of or which waste materials can be recycled.

Click here to find out more about SORTER

THE SORTER APP

The SORTER app is an app that allows people to scan their waste, and the app then shows people how they can dispose of it correctly and which bin they should use to remove the waste.

There is a large community within Estonia who practice a circular economy. The circular economy is a model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible.

PROMOTING THE SORTER APP

The students behind the SORTER app used the circular economy community to their advantage and used it to help spread the word of the project.
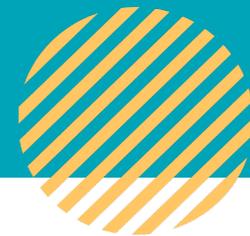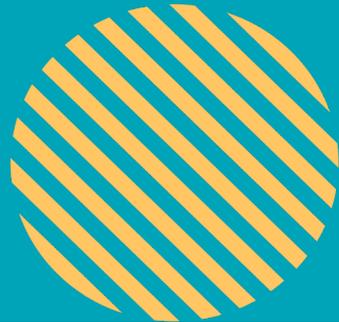
The students also found that there were many ways of utilizing digital tools, and used videoclips, direct e-mails, mailing lists, interviews with alumni all to share the app.

They also found Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram were also beneficial to the project- especially to share the content that they had made.

05

MODULE 4 EXCERCISES

WATCH

A CLOSER LOOK AT SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Watch the video for some examples of Civic Engagement On Social Media

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n8cMCdnQN40

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WATCH

CREATING A CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM

Watch the video on IN2IT Chicago: Creating a Platform for Civic Engagement

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-iT4a2Mpf0M

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Exercise: Solo activity

Think about everything that we have covered in this module. In your head, create an DCE project from scratch. Think about the following things:

What kind of project do you want to create? Think about how the initial team comes together? Pick 5 team members, and give them tasks to do. Who makes the decisions? Who is the team leader?

What are the goals of the project, what are the impacts? How will these impacts get measured? What will some of the goals be? What will the data sources be?

How will you ensure your team doesn't get project fatigue? What steps will you take to ensure this?

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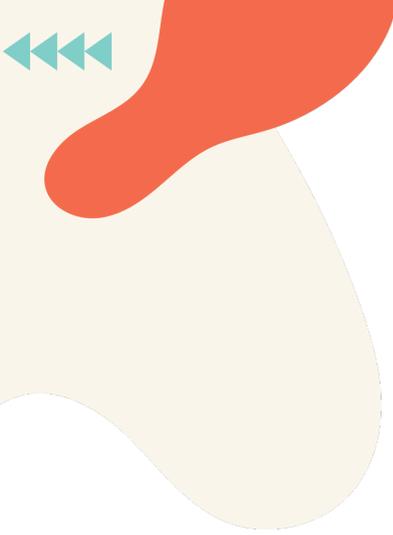
Exercise: Group activity

Think about everything that we have covered in this module. Split up into groups of between 4-6 people. Create an imaginary Digital Civic Engagement project together.

What kind of project does your team want to create, and what kind of obstacles is your team trying to address?
How did your initial team come together?

Get your team to assign roles together.

Who is the person making the decisions? Who is the team leader? What role does each team member bring? What skills does each person have, and are they assigned to be the best role for the team?

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