



Fundamentals for Using Technology in Transparency and Accountability Organisations

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Why You Should Use 'Fundamentals'

This 'Fundamentals' guide is designed to help organisations who want to use technology to improve the impact of their transparency and accountability work. It will assist you to develop overall strategies for using technology, and then to plan, implement and evaluate specific technology projects.

'Fundamentals' will also be useful to funders and intermediaries who are interested in supporting transparency and accountability projects, both through the stages outlined above, and the 'Checklist for Funders of Tech Projects.'

This guide was born of hard experience implementing technology projects. We have learned that for any technology to have maximum impact and be cost-effective, it is necessary:

- to have a clear idea of exactly **why** you are implementing a technology project: will it contribute to your overall organisational goals? Do you know for certain that your intended audiences will actually use your proposed technology project and/or contribute to it? Is the project the best way to achieve your organisation's tactical and strategic aims?
- to make sure that you have the internal **capacity** to manage the project, along with the ability to identify the right external expertise to carry out defined tasks.
- to build in early, frequent and regular **evaluation** of whether the development and implementation of your technology project is progressing as it should, and to make any needed changes as you go.

You want to avoid investing blood, sweat and tears in a costly plan and ending up with something that just doesn't work. It's better to build in the capacity and flexibility to make any necessary changes early on, and get the results that you really want!

To assure that you understand the 'Fundamentals', we've split the guide into the following sections:

- **Are You Ready to Start a Tech Project?**

This section will help you assess your readiness. Does your organisation have the requisite project management skills and expertise, and the capacity to handle and react to unforeseen challenges as they arise? Do you understand exactly how your technology project will help you reach your overall strategic goals?

- **What we've learned from Impact Case Studies: The Importance of Strategy**

Here, we summarise the findings of our research into the impact of technology projects on transparency and accountability work. Technology interventions that produce quick and dramatic increases in accountability are rare. However, gradual and evolutionary tech projects, based on strategies that take into account socio-political contexts, are more likely to be successful.

- **The Tech Strategy**

This section shows you how to ensure that your technology project will contribute to achieving your organisational goals. It will help you first to articulate your long-term vision of organisational success and plan a roadmap to get you there, and then to develop a tech vision and tech strategy to support your organisational vision and road map. These are the fundamental foundations for any tech project.

- **Tech Project Planning and Management**

In this section, we take a look at the nuts and bolts of integrating technology into your transparency and accountability work. We walk through the steps: assessing your current technology use, identifying your users, developing a project plan and creating a budget. We also look at key questions to ask in order to identify appropriate technologies for your work, and how to hire and work with a technology consultant/developer.

- **Checklist for Funders of Tech Projects**

This list helps funders assess whether grant applicants are being realistic about the effort it will take to implement their technology projects, and the potential impact of the projects. It also spells out best practice for funding, including flexibility, providing good feedback, building in support for on-going learning and evaluation, connecting grantees to other grantees doing similar work and promoting the use of free and open source software and open data.

- **Integrating Evaluation and Learning**

This explains how to set up a 'light-touch' framework for creating feedback loops during the implementation of your tech project, which will help you learn and become more effective as the project progresses. It covers determining your starting point or baseline and choosing ways to measure your tech project's impact.

And, finally, we've provided appendices that we think are essential additions that will help you think about what you're doing with technology.

- **"The Pyramid and Half-Wheel"** will help you identify stakeholders and prioritise the technology tactics you are using to engage them.
- **"Ensuring that your Tech Project is Usable"** highlights six practical steps to ensure that your project has a user-centred approach
- **"Integrating Mobiles into Your Communications Strategy"** provides you with five important questions to ask about using mobile phones to reach people.
- **"Understanding Data Advocacy"** looks at sourcing and using data effectively to support an advocacy strategy, including a checklist and a list of tools you can use to find, clean up and present your data.

Are You Ready to Start a Tech Project?

This document will help you understand how to engage with technology. We assume you are *either* part of a transparency and accountability organisation with finite resources, or you are funder interested in supporting the use of tech effectively. There are a huge range of ways in which tech can be used. Maybe you want to implement a technology project centred on using text messaging to engage constituents, or set up a web portal for government data you've obtained via a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request. Before you start, you should ask yourself: "Is our organisation ready to implement a tech project?", because this kind of endeavour will certainly push your capacities.



To check that you've got the vital organisational capacities that you'll need, it might be helpful to think about the following analogy. In the same way that your tech project needs certain broader organisational capacities to work out well, so most software also comes with a list of 'systems requirements' showing the things needed to make it run - including processor speed, the amount of memory needed etc. If you think about these common systems requirements as metaphors for the kinds of capacities of your organisation:

- the processor is your ability to think and react. The faster the processor the quicker you will be able to perform tasks
- the RAM (or Random Access Memory) is your capacity to multi-task. The more you have, the more files you can have open and the more things you can do at once.
- the hard-disk is your capacity to store and access information. The more hard-disk space, the more knowledge you can hold.
- the operating system holds the rules, policies and commands you can use to get things done. An operating system that does not have efficient and clear rules, policies and commands tends to have conflicts and is more likely to crash and bring the whole system down.

If we take a 'systems requirements' approach to your organisation, this may help us understand what organisation capacities you will need in order to run a technology project smoothly:

- You will need a lot of processor (or brain power) and the time and ability to react quickly to new problems and situations as they arise.
- You will need to be able to multi-task and have good project management skills to keep the day-to-day operations running while you face new challenges.
- You will need a lot of knowledge and expertise you can immediately access. It will be important for you to identify the expertise of staff, whether you will need external consultants, and to get them in place in advance.
- The rules, policies and strategies that your organisation operates under act as an operating system. The more efficient they are, the more likely you will be successful in implementing projects that will move you on your way towards achieving your mission.

But in addition, you will need a couple of key vital missing ingredients from those listed above, and these are the ones that our research shows are the most important, yet are often the most neglected. You need to know very clearly WHY you are doing the project and how it will contribute to your organisational goals. And you should know why you think this is the best way to help achieve them compared to other possible approaches.

So you should start by clarifying organisational goals and your tech strategy (see chapter, 'The Tech Strategy'). If you see a clear role for a tech project, you'll next need to check whether you need to strengthen one or more of your organisational capacities – management brain power and the time to apply it, multi-tasking abilities and expertise. If you don't have these elements in place, then you should focus your energies on building your organisation BEFORE undertaking tech project. You may decide it's wise to keep the project on hold until you have the strategy and capacities in place. Often, organisations see technology as a shortcut to short- and long-term gains, or almost an end in itself. As you can see from the *Impact Case Studies* research summary in this document, tech is rarely a shortcut, and it really only works when it is integrated as a tactic in a campaign that aims toward a specific strategic goal.

The Importance of Strategy: What we've learned from Impact Case Studies

Introduction

Today, adopting technology for use in transparency and accountability organisations is relatively cheap and easy. The Internet has already helped the movement deploy web-based maps, mobile technologies and interactive media to improve governance, streamline public service delivery and uncover corruption. New technologies enable citizens to get closer to the policy-making process and allow campaigners to build and mobilise grassroots networks, amplify their advocacy and rapidly increase the scale of their activities. However, in this dizzying flurry of activity it's quite easy to get absorbed in the potential at one's fingertips and be blinded by the glittering promises of technology utopia.

In 2010 the Transparency and Accountability Initiative commissioned research to examine when and how technology was working to bring about change, and, crucially, where it was not. *Impact case studies for middle income and developing countries* was the result. For a full version of the report, including the case studies, see <http://www.transparency-initiative.org/reports/impact-case-studies-from-middle-income-and-developing-countries>.

By studying seven cases in middle-income countries we came across some interesting patterns, which helped us draw some broader lessons about the usefulness of tech. The main things we learned from the *Impact Case Studies* were:

1. Technology interventions that quickly produce dramatic increases in accountability are rare.
2. Slow and gradual impact from a transparency technology project is more probable than one of a 'revolutionary' pace. Tailored and strategic implementations are more commonly successful.
3. The intended users for technology projects are often described as the general public, but often they are only used by the organisation itself and its closely connected stakeholders.
4. While an organisation can control the tech platform and its own strategies, it can not control the socio-political context. However, it can't ignore the socio-political context either.
5. Advocates increase the likelihood of success of a tech project when they proactively create connections between targeted information, users and decision-makers.

Three categories of technology interventions

We observed three different ways in which organisations used technology. Some groups targeted the general public directly with their tool, some targeted intermediaries such as the media, and some tailored their tools to specific audiences.

The first category consists of 'Homerun' interventions where technology produced dramatic increases in accountability. These types of interventions occur because they fulfil a latent desire that is present in a community. They provide functions that allow for actions that were previously unavailable. Widely known online examples of 'homeruns' are Wikipedia, Google or Facebook, where the technology effort all by itself enables a large impact and an immediate adoption. Often they are technologies we didn't know we needed before we used them, which then become the things we can't live without. This includes hardware as well: smartphones and tablets have become ubiquitous in developed countries relatively quickly. Impacts such as these are what most people expect technology projects to bring, however, through our study we found that this level of impact is exceedingly rare. Lessons from these projects might not be the most relevant to the majority of transparency and accountability projects.

The second category involves interventions that complement traditional media efforts, such as investigative journalists. They often aggregate and analyse information about public officials and public monies that can be accessed and used by the public in general. Two

examples of this from *Impact Case Studies* are the Fair Play Alliance and Mumbai Votes, both of which take existing data and information and repackage it via websites so that concrete 'allies' can use it. They rely on expert intermediaries (infomediaries) to work with unlocked data. Successful impacts as a result of these kinds of interventions are more common than 'home-runs.'

The third category consists of technology interventions that are designed to support and complement tactics that are part of an organisational or campaign strategy. These types of interventions rely on the ability of organisations to understand their own capabilities, the audiences they are trying to reach, their role in making change possible and the environment in which they will operate. We feel these interventions have the most potential on impacting accountability. The other chapters of this guide provide more background on this approach.

Knowing who your information providers and users are will help your technology intervention to succeed.

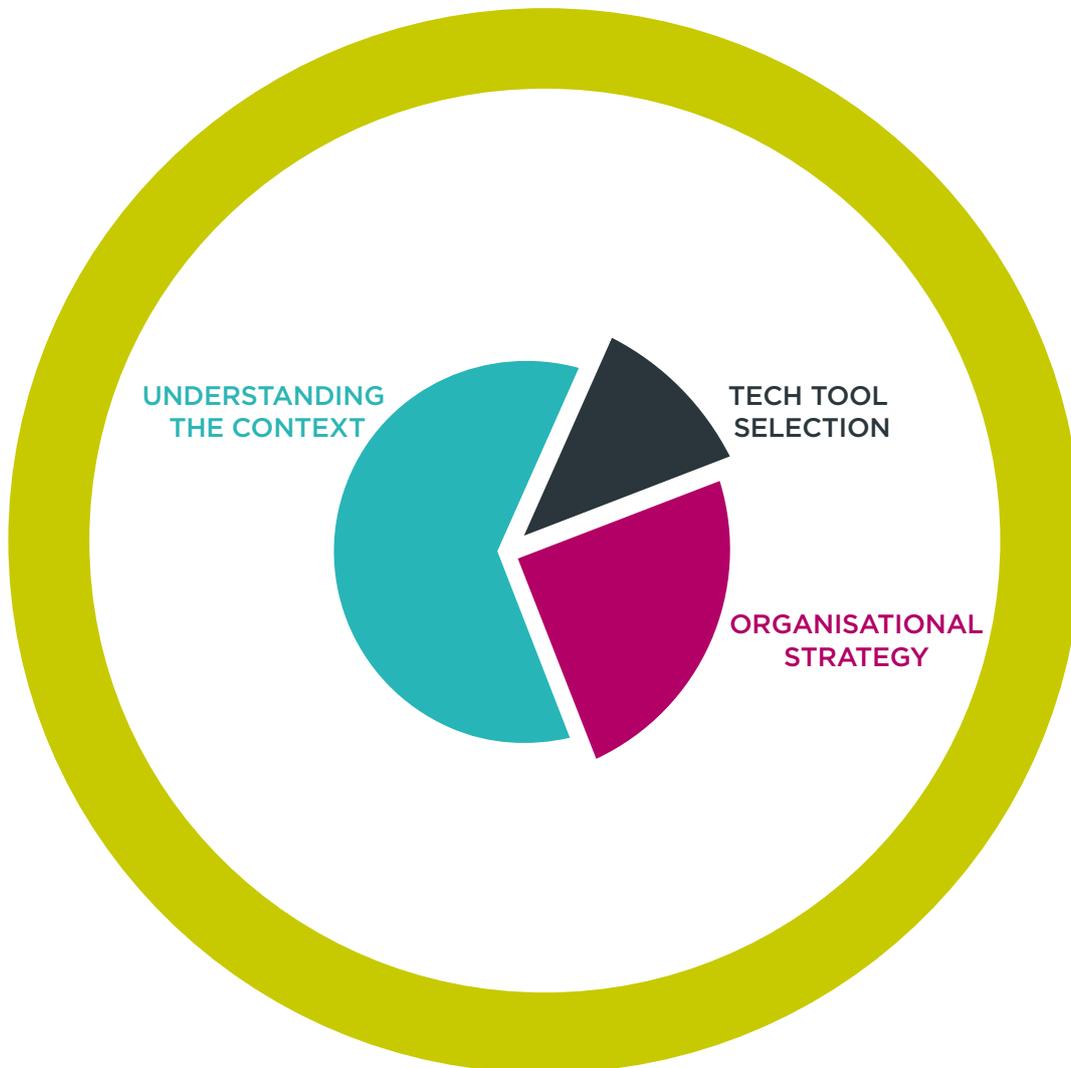
Target audiences for a tech project can vary. A common mistake that transparency organisations make is believing that the users of their information will be the general public, when it's more likely to be people who are closely connected to the organisation. This is especially true with organisations that are trying to expose the motivations behind public decision making, as data on these issues need to be scraped from a variety of sources and then analysed and reported on by investigative journalists before they can be understood by the public at large. However, it's different when the general public can be engaged in gathering data around issues that have an impact on them directly, such as public services they rely on or products they have purchased. In this situation, the public at large is more likely to try and use the information that is made available.

Transparency and Accountability advocates need to pay attention to socio-political contexts in order to achieve success

Understanding the socio-political context in which your campaigns exist is critical to the success of your interventions. The following questions should be asked when planning and implementing technology projects on the subject of accountability:

- What are the needs and interests of stakeholders? Why should they connect with and consume the information provided?
- What capacity do stakeholders have to receive and be engaged by your information and then act? This can depend on factors such as local infrastructure, literacy rates and economic status. Be aware of your audiences' habits when it comes to consuming information.
- What would influence key groups to act? What are the connections and lines of influences between your various audiences?
- Will your organisation be a principal user of the information? Or will it be providing support to those who do use it?
- How will opposition targets react to and resist your accountability efforts? Will they refuse to provide relevant information, or distort it? Will they find loopholes in the rules to circumvent accountability?
- If your project has the intended effect, how will those results be publically or socially valuable?
- Which area should receive your greatest mind-share when you are planning a tech project?

The figure below demonstrates how context ought to occupy the **greatest 'mind-share'** in your consideration of which factors affect your planning, followed by organisational strategy, then finally by platform considerations.



Which area should receive your greatest mind-share when you are planning a tech project?

Organisations working on transparency and accountability issues are acutely aware of the need for planning strategies that address political constraints and take advantage of political opportunities. A technology strategy should follow the same rules.

Transparency Action Cycle

A transparency project is likely to involve three variables: the data that will become the information that people use, the individuals that will make use of the information, and the targets – those people or groups whose behaviour you are trying to change in order to increase their accountability and responsiveness.

It may start with data that are being made available OR it may be an initiative to obtain the release of data to the public, but the first step for a transparency organisation will be to identify the primary users of the information: are they citizens or journalists? Are they other civil society organisations? You need an understanding of how these users will interact with the information, and also how the transparency project will allow users to do something that they couldn't do before – often this is simply making data that are already public available in a searchable format. How will the information be used? In media articles? In a court of law?

What is the intended outcome of your action? Do you want to educate the public about government transactions? Are you hoping to expose misconduct? What will the reaction of the targets be? How will this project lead to greater accountability and responsiveness?

If your project is successful, it will probably lead to more data being released, and you will then have to think about the providers of that information. Where is the data coming from? How will you engage with those entities and persuade them to produce and provide data that can be aggregated and put to use by your audiences?

As more information is released, the cycle will need to be repeated, and your organisation should continually be re-evaluating the uses that the data are put to, your own actions and your desired outcomes.

When you think about your tech project are you asking all these questions? Are you making assumptions that are unlikely to come true without a tonne of work? Is there anything you could do differently?

Have a realistic vision of the impact of your technology project

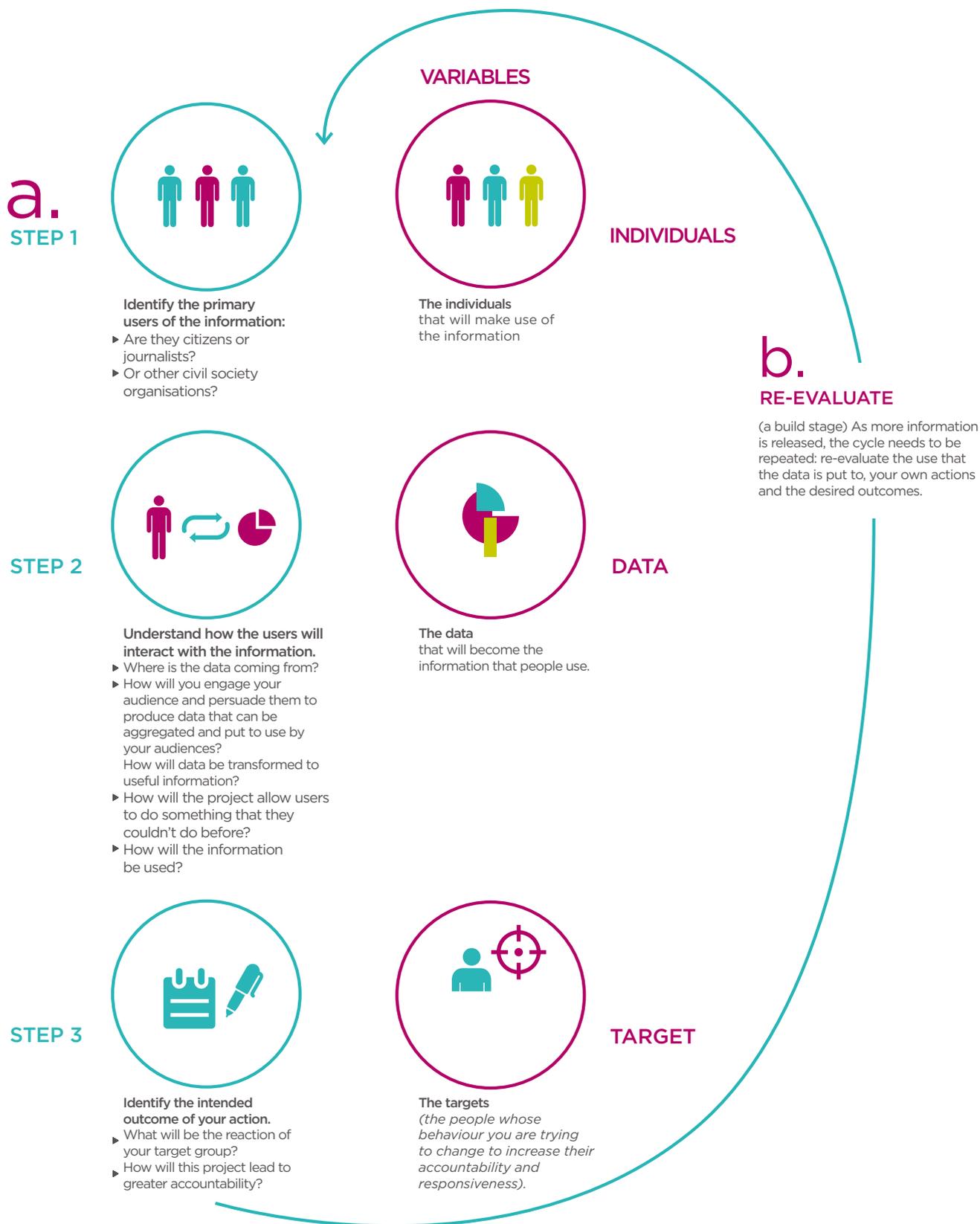
As the connections described in the section on socio-political context (above) demonstrate, it's important to monitor your progress and to understand how your goals and impacts may evolve as you implement your project. The successful model that the research found to be most common, and the model that *Fundamentals* is suggesting, is one of gradual impact rather than one that is 'revolutionary'.

Evaluating the success of your intervention at each step along the way, and using the information thus gained to fine-tune your expectations, will allow you to make the greatest possible progress in reaching your goals.

Further recommendations to achieve success:

- Use developers and consultants that share your values and understand your goal. They are more likely to understand the socio-political contexts.
- Always strive to communicate with funders as stakeholders and partners.
- Assure that your tech project is implemented with the same openness and transparency that you seek from others.

Transparency-Accountability Action Cycle



Conclusion

As mentioned above, we know that more gradual and evolutionary tech projects, based on strategies that take into account socio-political contexts, are more likely to be successful. Other key factors to consider are the constraints and opportunities of your stakeholders to be involved with the project itself.

Here are the cases that were examined:

Case	Location	Issue	URL
Cidade Democratica	Sao Paulo, Brazil	Citizen participation in local government	http://www.cidadedemocratica.com.br/
Reclamos	Santiago, Chile	Consumer complaints	http://www.reclamos.cl/
Budget Tracking Tool	Nairobi, Kenya	Budget monitoring	http://www.opengovernance.info/BTKenya/index.php
Ushahidi & Uchaguzi	Nairobi, Kenya	Election monitoring	http://www.ushahidi.com/ http://uchaguzi.co.ke/
Mumbai Votes	Mumbai, India	Legislative Agenda	http://mumbaivotes.com/
Kiirti (Ushahidi)	Bangalore, India	Complaint Resolution	http://www.kiirti.org/
Fair Play Alliance	Fair Bratislava, Slovakia Alliance	Watchdog, Citizen Journalist, Advocacy	August http://www.fair-play.sk/index_en.php

- Cidade Democrática (Brazil) is a collaborative action platform that enables citizens, organisations and governmental institutions to report problems and propose solutions related to matters of concern in Brazilian cities. The idea underlying Cidade Democratica is that citizens should assume responsibility for their streets, neighbourhoods, and cities, take an active part in local problem-solving, and promote political causes. The platform covers a wide range of municipal issues, from environment and health to transport, education, and planning.
- Reclamos (Chile) provides an open forum for consumers to share their experience and complain about services they've received from either private or public entities. The initial goal of Reclamos was to establish a robust complaint resolution mechanism and promote a more responsible corporate and consumer culture. While this goal has not been achieved, the platform did evolve into a large and vibrant community of consumers that manages effectively to put pressure on corporations and compel them to change some of their practices. It is now one of the biggest user-generated content websites in Chile.
- The Budget Tracking Tool (Kenya) draws information from the Kenyan Community Development Fund and provides online budgetary data for all constituency-level development projects in Kenya. The Budget Tracking Tool automatically responds to information requests and sends detailed budgetary information for specific projects via email or SMS. The Tool is primarily oriented to established NGOs and civil groups that are active in the constituencies and capable of confronting local politicians in cases of potential corruption.
- Uchaguzi (Kenya) monitored the 2010 constitutional referendum in Kenya. The platform mapped tagged reports of election violations, made by the community. Reports were sent via SMS by citizens and trained referendum observers, verified, and communicated to public authorities. Due to the collaborative and trust-based relations with Uchaguzi, the government responded to the majority of these reports.

- Mumbai Votes (India) tracks the behaviour of leaders, from all levels of government, both as they run for office and once they are in office. Through using both online and offline mechanisms, Mumbai Votes creates transparency for governance year-round by positing that citizens need information about their officials not only during election cycles but also throughout an official's career. Mumbai Votes primarily uses a website that includes social media outlets.
- Kiirti (India) is a platform that aims to facilitate complaint resolution from citizens. Kiirti aims to be a tool which NGOs can adapt to their specific needs and which would allow a technologically advanced Ushahidi platform to be used effectively by many different NGOs, even those lacking technological capabilities. Kiirti has established web-based reporting, as well as digitised phone reporting, and is SMS enabled. Kiirti and Uchaguzi reflect the transformations that Ushahidi underwent after its initial launch during the violent escalation of the Kenyan elections.
- Fair Play Alliance (Slovakia) is an advocacy and citizen watchdog organisation that uses technology to aggregate large databases and communicate campaigns and information effectively to citizens, journalists, and governments. Fair Play Alliance's main database has recently undergone a renovation and is now entirely Open Source, Open Data, and more accessible. Fair Play Alliance runs specific advocacy campaigns using new media and technological innovations to reach a wide audience.

The Tech Strategy

Introduction

Organisations, people and groups working for social change often adopt a reactionary mode almost without thinking, that is, they are constantly just responding to crises or to agendas that other people set. Often, organisations apply technology solutions in a similar way, trying out a new technology because they feel they have to, but with little thought given to whether it will work, or why. In a never-ending search for easy answers, technology solutions can seem like shortcuts to overcome hurdles and challenges, but after they've finished adopting a new technology many organisations find that they've expended precious resources and scarce time for very little gain. Often technology projects become a resource-intensive distraction.

At the Transparency and Accountability Initiative we've been concerned about this problem for the past three years. We see that technology has the potential to transform the field of transparency and accountability, but we also acknowledge that this potential remains largely untapped. Much project planning is driven by the technology and its possibilities, which can overshadow a more mission-driven and strategic use of the web or mobile tech. We've been investing in research and capacity building activities to support strategy-driven approaches to using technology by transparency and accountability organisations.

Here's what we've learned: it's very rare that transparency groups simply start using technology and quickly succeed in raising levels of accountability. Most organisations only succeed once they start using technology to support specific aims and tactics that are part of a larger strategic framework. In order to achieve this, you need to know where technology fits in, and understand the impact it will have on your organisation and its goals. To increase the likelihood of success, start with your strategy, develop your tactics, and then use technology as a tool to support those tactics.

An organisational strategy implies a long term vision, a theory of change about how to achieve that, choices about your priority goals and an overall roadmap to get there.

Once you've established that, you should think about developing a tech strategy that:

- Articulates a vision for how tech can help you achieve your organisational strategy
- Identifies appropriate technologies and the value that would be added to your work from their use.
- Provides a framework for creating tech plans to support achieving specific short term goals, such as a particular campaign or service.
- Guide you in the effective implementation of those tech projects.
- Allows for evaluation of the effectiveness of your tech project, especially in relation to how it is helping you achieve your organisational goals.

Ideally you would work with a technology expert from inside or outside your organisation who can guide you through the process.



1. Articulate your organisational strategy

It is important for any Transparency and Accountability organisation to have thought about the changes it's aiming for and the impact it wants to make. For example, if your focus is increasing government accountability, say, how will you go about it?

Create your long-term vision and theory of change

A Theory of Change is a way to develop a vision for success. It is created by engaging both the staff and stakeholders who are directly involved and engaged by your work in order to ensure commitment and involvement in the future. The Theory of Change will help identify your priorities; it will inform strategic choices. It will clarify your direction and help you understand the tasks that will need to undertake.

An example of a vision of success statement for a transparency and accountability organisation:

"We have a society of engaged individuals who are not afraid or corrupt because we have strong institutions that are open and transparent."

There are many ways of identifying long-term visions effectively, and you can learn from the non-profit, donor and for-profit sectors. At the Transparency and Accountability Initiative we have drawn on the work of our members Department for International Development (DfID) and International Budget Partnership for an understanding of the key components

- **DfID: Theory of Change:**
http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/pdf/outputs/mis_spc/DFID_ToC_Review_VogelV7.pdf
- **IBP: Impact Planning Guide:**
<http://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/Super-Duper-Impact-Planning-Guide.pdf>

Key elements for developing a Theory of Change:

- **Process mapping:** map out the logical sequence of events that will lead you to your vision, starting from the actions you would undertake and following them through to the potential changes you expect them to bring about.
- **Reflection:** you should be considering your own values, worldviews and philosophies, along with others and challenge existing assumptions about how and why change might result from your work.

For a diverse set of people to come up with a unified goal can be challenging. People working in the Transparency and Accountability sector tend to be unwavering and passionate about their visions for change. It can be difficult to be inclusive and ensure that all voices are heard. Consider where engaging your stakeholders in discussions will be the most valuable. Topics to explore:

- **Context:** analyse the situation as things stand now, along with how the problem evolved, and the social, political and institutional landscape you are working in, with any opportunities for change they may offer. Think about whether there are any other actors who would have an influence in bringing about the changes you desire.
- **Beneficiaries:** who benefits and how? Who are the specific beneficiaries of the technology programme or intervention that you want to undertake?
- **Desired long-term change:** what is the ultimate aim that the tech initiative would support.
- **Process/sequence of change:** what are the individual steps that will lead to the desired long-term outcome? Articulate the long-term change you aim for, supported by a sequence of intermediate changes.

- **Actors in the context:** analyse the people, organisations and networks that influence change (both supporting and opposing it) in the setting of the problem you're trying to tackle. Look at how much power they have and how they interact.
- **Analyse your assumptions:** in order to work out whether the activities you intend to undertake will have the results that you foresee, try to be explicit about how the desired change would come about, making links between causes and their effects and analysing the worldviews, beliefs, rationales and analytical perspectives of your own group and the various players as well as the evidence that informs this assessment.
- **Sphere of influence:** an analysis of your programme's reach and ability to influence change, either directly through its interventions or indirectly through collaboration and interaction.
- **Strategic choices and intervention options:** decide what you need to do to bring about the changes you seek.
- **Timeline:** establish a realistic timeframe for change to unfold, including the expected trajectory of changes following your intervention/s.
- **Indicators:** which areas will be the best indicators of how the project is succeeding? What should you monitor with evaluations and impact assessments?

You will want to create a narrative summary that captures the outcomes of the discussion and include any relevant diagrams.

Four basic, common questions you may want to ask yourself:

- What does success look like for you and the actors? What will change?
- What are the precursors to this success? What needs to exist in order for success to be achieved?
- Whose behaviour needs to change to achieve success, and how? (Who needs to take what action? Let's call them X.)
- Which activity (planned or on-going) would you say is the most effective one for getting X to change their behaviour? (What is within your control, and what is beyond it?)
- In order to achieve success, is there anything you could or should be doing differently?

Here are some key resources for creating a theory of change:

- Centre for Theory of Change:
<http://www.theoryofchange.org>
- Keystone Accountability:
<http://www.keystoneaccountability.org>

Choose your specific organisational goals and create an overall roadmap to get there

Although setting your vision with external stakeholders via a method such as the theory of change is invaluable, you must also focus on the specifics of how you will actually achieve change. This is where a strategic plan for your organisation comes in. The organisational strategy is an internal process that involves your staff and board of directors.

The organisational strategy should be seen as a roadmap, giving details of the steps necessary to reach your goals. It will provide more focus and will be set to a timeline – often three to five years. It will lay out a series of milestones within the timeline, and act as an organisational guide.



Start by taking stock of the environment in which your organisation is currently operating. Conducting a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats – http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SWOT_analysis) can be very helpful. Then decide on your objectives.

Generally, an organisational strategy will contain:

- A Values Statement or guiding principles that guide the organisation's operations
- An assessment of the current situation
- An articulation of strategic goals
- A narrative plan for how each the strategic goals will be achieved
- An articulation of the roles needed to implement the plan (both internal and external to the organisation)
- A summary of the resources needed
- A timeline

Resources

- Wikimedia captured their own strategic planning process at <http://strategy.wikimedia.org>
- The Guardian's Voluntary Sector site has a helpful round-up about conducting strategic reviews at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/voluntary-sector-network/2012/jun/21/charity-strategic-review-advice>

2. Identify your tech strategy

Create your tech vision

A tech vision is a written statement that summarises how technology will support the work of your organisation. You would arrive at a Tech Vision by looking at the role of technology in three crucial areas:

- Your Theory of Change
- Your organisational strategy
- The value it brings to users

The people you are trying to reach or serve should be at the centre of your Tech Vision. How will technology provide value to your audiences?

An example of a Tech Vision statement from a library:

"The Library will be both a physical place and an information portal, which residents will be able to access 24 hours a day, seven days a week, through its website and electronic resources. Library staff will be provided with continuous training and development opportunities so they may better serve the public. "

A transparency and accountability example:

"We take advantage of technologies to connect citizens to data and information that will allow them to hold their governments to account. The organisation seeks to engage and interact with citizens and with elected officials to promote transparency in government. Our website acts as a portal for the information that we gather and is a means to provide access to that information for the public."

Choose your tech goals and create a roadmap to get there

A tech strategy will support your tech vision. Start by determining the key challenges you face in implementing your organisational strategies. Then identify the principal actions your organisation undertakes to fulfil its mission; for example, communications, stakeholder engagement and fundraising, planning and project management. Then, ask how well your existing technology supports your key tasks and functions. What works well? What should remain as it is? What should be changed? You should prioritise your tasks in relation to what's most important to your organisational strategy.



Now you're ready to build the tech strategy. It should parallel your organisational strategy and contain:

- A statement about how using technology relates and upholds the organisation's values.
- An assessment of your current use of technology (see the assessment section of the Tech Planning & Management Section).
- An articulation of your technology goals.
- The roles needed and whether they are to be filled internally or externally.
- A timeline with milestones, and a budget.

The document should be free of technological jargon and acronyms, so it can be shared with non-technical audiences as well as internal staff.

Conclusion

Technology can be important for achieving transparency and accountability, especially in regard to interacting with public data. However, technology projects are fraught with pitfalls and unexpected problems. A tech strategy that is created from the foundations of a theory of change and an organisational strategy will ensure that your use of technology will meet your vision and needs. Having an adaptable and user-centred approach will help you avoid pitfalls.

The Tech Strategy should relate not only to the uses of technology, but to making connections between the goals of your organisation and its use of technology. An awareness of your long-term goals and strategic plan will be indispensable when you are evaluating the success of your tech projects. You should then be able accurately to answer the question: how is technology helping us to achieve our goals?

And now you are ready to undertake a technology project.

Technology Project Planning and Management

Once you've explored your goals and the potential for using technology in your tech strategy, you are ready to start looking at the nuts and bolts of integrating technology into your transparency and accountability work. While technologies can change quickly, your strategies are likely to remain much more constant. Your plan will need to be agile in addressing the implementation of new technologies, and yet built on the solid foundations of your strategy. You can't have good project management without good project planning. Adaptable and flexible planning is the key to managing technology projects successfully. Don't gamble that your project will come exactly in on time and on budget: build in some cushion.

We've broken down the project planning process into 6 steps that ends with implementation and best practices on project management.

Step One:

Assessment - What is your current technology use?



Before you make concrete plans, its best to examine your own current capacities by conducting an assessment of your existing technology. This can be compiled into a working document that will lay the foundation for your future technology plans.

To assess your current use of technology, answer the following questions:

- What works well about your current technology setup?
- What doesn't work well with your current technology setup?
- When you have problems with your tech, how do you solve them?
- Do you have reliable support?
- Is your broadband supply adequate for your current needs?
- Does your staff have access to the appropriate devices, such as laptops, mobile phones, etc.?
- How much of your operating budget is devoted to technology?

- What sort of external expertise do you use? Do you have relationships with consultants and/or software developers?
- Do you have social media accounts for your organisation, such as Facebook or Twitter?
- Does your organisation have its own website? Do you have a domain name that is also used with staff email?
- Do you back up important data regularly? Are the backups stored securely?
- Do you routinely discuss the technology solutions your organisation has implemented during staff meetings?

The idea is to examine your weak and strong points when it comes to tech use. An assessment should help you think objectively about your limitations.

If you are to undertake any new technology projects, you should feel that the majority of your answers to the questions above are positive in nature. You should sort out any problem areas, particularly in regard to support, BEFORE undertaking any new tech projects - are you able to handle existing problems effectively?

Look at areas that will be important for supporting your tech strategy. How well are you currently doing with communications? Are you able to handle data effectively?

Step two:

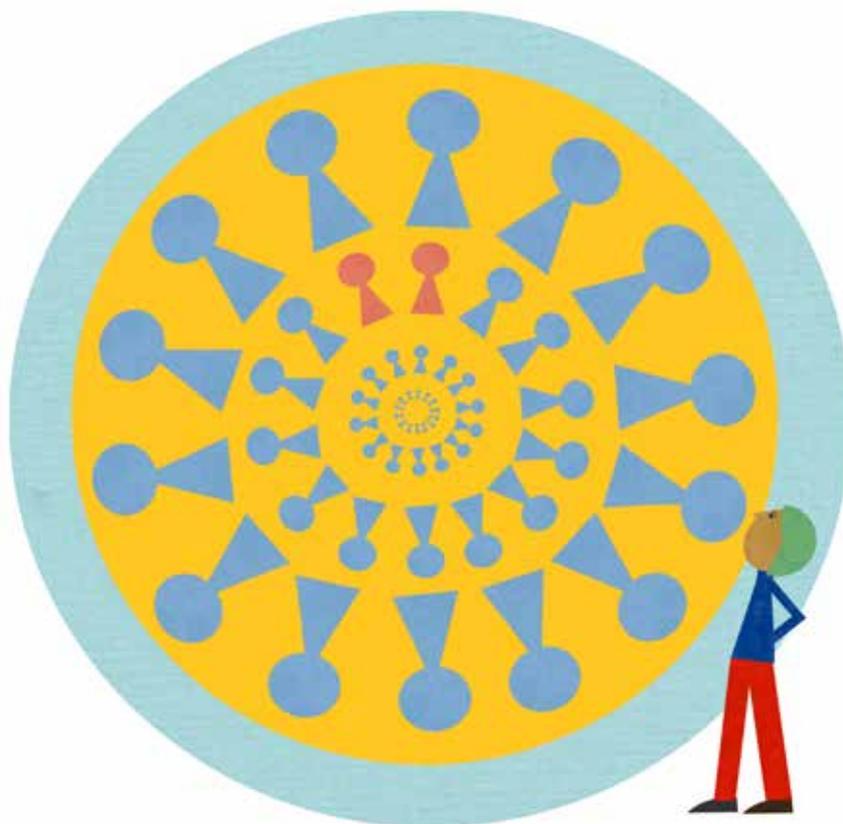
Assure your tech project goals are aligned with your tech vision and your strategic plan



Revisit the work you did in creating a tech strategy and state a goal for the project that relates to your Tech Vision; for example, "this website will connect citizens to data we are collecting about government expenditure". Establish how this project will move you forward in your strategic plan

Step three:

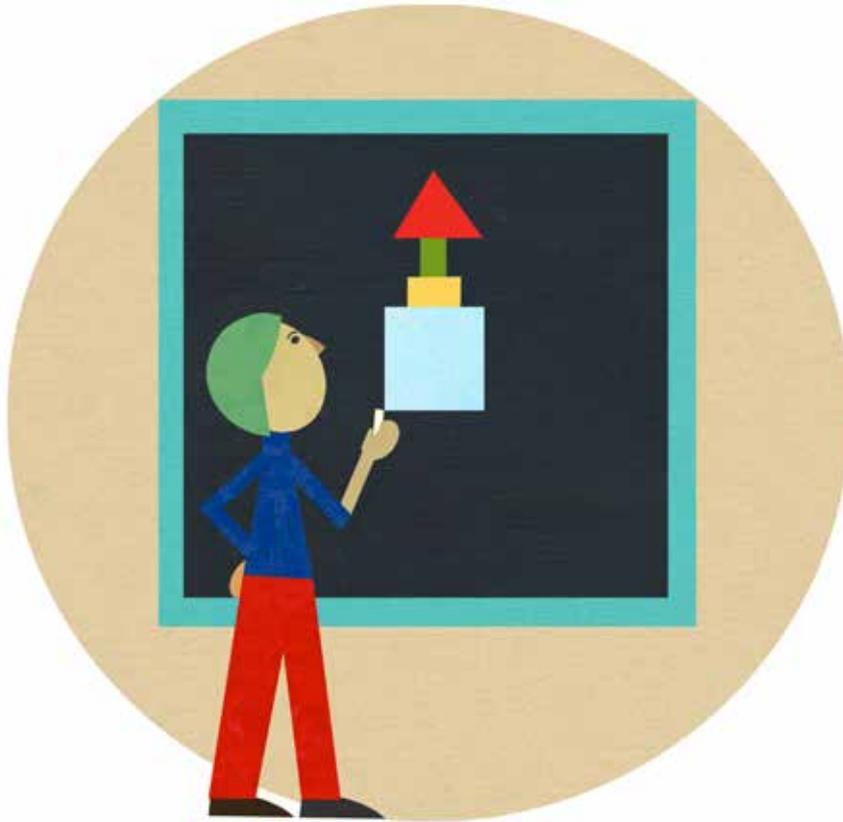
Identify users and get them involved



- Test your assumptions about potential users. List the different types of users you expect, and how you think they will use the technology. Then find actual users that fit those profiles and interview them about how they will interact with the technology plan that you are thinking of implementing.
- Create user profiles and scenarios that show what users will be able to accomplish by using the technology (See appendix Ensuring that your Tech Project Is Usable).

Step Four:

Develop a project plan



- Reach out to peers and see if they have already implemented similar projects; find out what's worked and what hasn't. Your peers will provide better advice than any tech expert. Tap into existing networks that are connected to the work you are doing, such as TA Bridge.
- Identify the critical and indispensable features you need and get them addressed first. Save the "wouldn't it be nice" features for later.
- Look for Pilot opportunities. Can you deploy a version of your project with a few individuals on your staff first, to test it before a wider deployment? When you do deploy it throughout your organisation, these individuals can help guide other users in how to use the new software.
- Build in ways to do monitoring and learning throughout your project plan. Determine evaluation metrics and identify opportunities to monitor progress (See chapter on Integrating "Evaluation" and Learning)
- Get external expertise early. Your technologies should work optimally straight out of the box – but you might need to hire someone to help with the initial setup or make some minor tweaks to get it right.
- Examine your organisation's calendar and identify quiet times where problems encountered during installation and identified in testing will have minimum impact.
- Make realistic timelines: Tech projects ALWAYS take longer than you imagined. Map out a time line and then **quadruple** the amount of time projected for implementation.
- Build in lots of opportunities for user feedback (See Appendix: Ensuring that your Tech Project is Usable). Make sure you stay on top of what works and what doesn't once you've deployed your tech project.
- Create a healthy budget. Make sure you have enough resources for implementation. Remember, with technology, costs typically begin AFTER you install it.
- Make sure you have a plan to maintain the technology after it's implemented.

Step Five: Create a budget



- Ask other organisations about their costs for implementing similar technology projects.
- You'll probably need twice as much money, time and human resources as you initially think. This includes the amount of time needed to set your project up and configure it.
- A large proportion of your budget, say around 70%, should be set aside for user testing and training.
- Always refer to the budgets and actual final expenditure of past projects when creating new budgets.
- If you are using a FOSS Content Management System (CMS) to support your website, your costs should be in the range of zero to 10,000 USD. If you are edging closer to 20,000, there's something wrong with your costings.
- Spending money on software is not a bad thing, and it's important to realise that everyone involved in software development projects needs to make a living!
- Build in an unforeseen budget item and be aware of how much cushion you have on your budget lines. Don't forget to get approval if you are going over- or under- budget. Some funders may also allow for a 10% over- or under-spend without the need to get specific approval.
- Communicate with donors about other changes in the budget during implementation.
- Don't forget to budget for long term maintenance and support

Step Six:

Implement your project plan



The key to successful implementation is to develop and nurture the team of individuals involved in the project. Strive for transparency in decision making and keep everyone focused on success and include them in your progress on achieving it. Model for federated ownership, striving for clear domains of accountability within the team. If the project manager holds too much and has not properly distributed responsibilities, the chances for success greatly diminish. And remember, the project manager's most important role is to be a good communicator.

The next step?

It's likely that after you've successfully completed all six steps you'll be ready to take on a new tech project and you'll go back to step one - assessment. However you'll be starting step one with a lot more wisdom about what it takes to run a tech project. Particularly if you've given some focus to the next chapter, evaluation and feedback loops.

More Project Management best practices

- Be clear on the differences between projects and tasks. A task is short and takes minimal effort, while projects should be broken down into tasks. When you are treating a task as a project, it will go much slower.
- Be clear about what is essential and what is optional
- Near term deliverables should have greater detail while you will have less detail in long term deliverables
- Keep people conditioned for communication. Have routine communication and communicate as much and as often as possible with team members. It's better to have a meeting and say there is nothing to report than to not have the meeting.
- Gauge how well team members are doing, those who face a greater amount of challenges should have more check ins and communication. Those who are having greater success should have more autonomy and freedom.
- Increase the frequency of team meetings as you approach your launch dates – think about meeting every two weeks, then every week and, finally, every day, as your deadline approaches.
- Extend the deadline for a project if necessary, rather than launching a tech project that isn't ready.
- Remember that people don't like to give bad news, so create space where it's safe to admit failures. The sooner you know something has gone wrong, the better.
- Communicate routinely with all stakeholders involved in the project, including funders.
- High risk projects should have greater documentation to assure accountability and also capture learnings.
- Establish a shared dashboard that has realtime updates on progress and shows individual task lists.
- Have shorter debriefs more often rather than longer ones less often.
- Create checklist templates and revise them as needed.

How to identify the right technology

Start by asking: what else is out there?
What software/tech solutions already exist that might help you address your challenges?

When you are researching solutions here are some key questions to ask:

- What is the problem we want the technology to solve? Do not rush to answer this question, and make sure it's answered BEFORE you start looking at possible technological solutions.
- Will it meet all of our needs right out of the box? If the software won't do this, then it's probably best to look elsewhere.
- What will it cost to support and maintain? You may need to employ a computer professional who can make the needed changes and provide periodical maintenance.
- Will your stakeholders find it useable? Productivity is key: you don't want people wasting time because they can't access the functions they need.
- How much training will it take? Training on any technology is always advisable. Whether you conduct the training in-house or bring in a specialised trainer, training gives you an opportunity to ensure that everyone has the expertise they need. It also allows you to discover any problems that people may have.
- Will the software run on the hardware you have? Always check the system requirements. It's not going to be cost effective to have to replace computers just in order to run software.
- Is it secure? If your work is highly sensitive, is this software that has been 'hardened' to provide extra layers of security?
- Can it be shared/deployed with your partners and collaborators? Are any of our partners/colleagues/allies already using it?
- Will you be able to get technical support for it? If you have a problem, will you be able to find a local consultant to fix it for you?
- Does it have a healthy support community? Are there other non-profits who use the software and with whom you can exchange tips and solutions?
- Is it still being developed? Have there been recent releases? Are new releases in the works? Are periodic updates issued, ensuring there are patches for bugs and security holes?
- How will you support and maintain the solution over the long run? If you are using a consultant or developer to configure the solution for you, how will you maintain it after they are gone?
- Is it open source? Any software solution that will limit your organisations options to modify it or use other platforms, and put a lock on how you can store your data is undesirable.

Once the software solution is installed, make sure you have documentation about it that your staff and your stakeholders can understand. Make sure you also have a guide to troubleshooting if something goes wrong.



How to hire a consultant/developer

Your first step in your technology project is likely to be bringing in a consultant or developer who is experienced with the technologies you wish to implement and can help you work through the numerous steps and avoid the pitfalls.

If you are using a consultant to help you identify solutions, then you need to make sure they are neutral to which technology you will use and/or have a deep understanding of open-source software. You want a consultant that will help you choose software that's right for you, not what will benefit them.

It's also likely that you will need to hire someone to help you set up and configure the software and/or hardware, and for long-term support. In some instances you may need to hire a developer to customise and modify the software so that it works better for the needs of your organisation. Whoever you hire, you will be best served if they are part of the development community for that package. Here are some good reasons for this:

- Your experience with the software can serve as feedback to the developer community, and they will learn from your impressions of the package, both good and bad.
- If there are features that the package lacks, having contact with the development community means that you can be informed as to whether they plan to address those features in a future release or if they can consider addressing them.
- Be very wary of any customisations of software being done outside the development community. This might be presented to you as a cheaper option, but in the long run it will cost you more money, as any custom code that is not fed back to the developers will mean you are prevented from upgrading to new releases.

Along with strong engagement with the development community, some other good ideas when hiring a consultant are:

- Initially use a short term discovery/scoping contract where the contractor spells out costs and time for a second longer term contract.
- Assure their values are in line with the mission/goals of the organisation. The more that they understand and support what you are trying to do, the better.



- Make sure you understand exactly what you are paying for – how much time and how that time is being spent. If you are paying for long-term support, make sure you clearly understand the parameters of that support.
- Keep part of your budget for a consultant in reserve – only reveal two thirds of your budget to the consultant!
- Use contracts written in a way that both you and the consultant can understand. Make sure you clearly lay out timelines, deliverables, expectations and any parameters, such as licensing, that will have an impact on the outcome of the project.

It's well worth finding a developer or consultant who believes in the work you are doing. You may be in a situation where you can't judge the quality of a developer's work until after it's completed, so it's important to trust the developer and their motives for working with you. If you aren't certain of their motivations and can't gauge the quality of their work, it might be worth pulling in someone who can.

Checklist for funders of tech projects

The work of non-profit organisations, particularly campaigners and advocates, is increasingly entwined with new technologies. There are myriad ways in which organisations can incorporate new technologies and new uses of data in their work; sifting through these options and helping grantees to make strong and sustainable decisions about where to put their effort is becoming a key role for grantmakers across many issues areas. Often grantees are looking for quick fixes to long term goals. They can also be unrealistic about the impact the technology will have, whether the technology is adequate for their strategy, and the amount of time and resources needed to realistically implement. On the other hand, when an organisation can successfully achieve their goals by using technology, it can have impact that goes well beyond the sector. Here are some pointers to help evaluate whether a proposal to support a technology project is a worthwhile investment.



- Can you identify and follow a believable theory of change, organisational strategy, or chain of action, which the technology project your grantee is proposing will advance? Is there a clearly defined advocacy or organizing strategy to which the tech will contribute?
- Do they articulate a good understanding of the audience they are trying to reach and level of demand for using technology to solve the problems they seek to address? Have they given focus to potential users of the technology and whether there are unique barriers to accessing the technology that will affect who can participate in the project?
- How might your grantee have solved the same problem without technology – or are they addressing a problem that couldn't be solved without technology?
- Are they attempting to create something new? These kinds of projects produce huge hurdles and they rarely succeed. Proceed with enormous caution.
- How will they maintain the project? Is there a plan for sustaining the project after this funding cycle is finished? Are you expecting to see a follow-up proposal to keep it running, and/or to see it folded into their core operations requests to you and other funders?

- Is the technology appropriate for the context or will it somehow undermine their goals? For example, are they using bulk SMS to try to engage community and bring them into a campaign? Bulk SMS often is seen as an unwanted communication and an irritant. This can be hard to identify but is always a question worth asking.
- Do they have the capacity to implement the project? A good indicator is if they have an experienced project manager who has dealt with technology implementations, and who clearly also understands the broader strategic goals of the project/organisation. If they don't, that doesn't mean you shouldn't fund them but you should expect a steep learning curve and might want to encourage a focus on building this capacity going forward.
- Have they identified all the expertise needed (again, linked to the organisation's broader strategy)? Such as:
 - o Web Developer - a programmer who specializes in the development of web applications
 - o Graphic designer - who assembles together images, typography or motion graphics to create a piece of design for published, printed or electronic media.
 - o Data Analyst – aids in the process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and modeling data with the goal of highlighting useful information and suggesting conclusions.
 - o Social Media Expert – guides others in the use of tools and platforms people use to publish, converse and share content online
 - o Online Cartographer - specialises in creating maps for use in online content.
- What licensing are they using? Open Source is preferable, especially if they are wanting to share their efforts with others, or want to keep their data portable. Proprietary may provide short-term gains, but also might be the only choice they have.
- Have they considered how the technology might be putting people at risk? IE, storing names of activists in an accessible database or in a contacts list on a mobile phone. Sending email or SMS giving times and locations of actions and protest?

Tech funding Best Practices

- **Be flexible.** Technology projects often evolve as they are implemented and forcing grantees to adhere to strict timelines and budget lines can work against the ability to achieve success.
- Provide **good feedback** mechanisms and easy ways they can update you on changes and get quick approval and input for changes to their project.
- Define **evaluation parameters** at the beginning, and don't rely on output metrics but rather outcomes (and hopefully impact) based on long term goals.
- Make **connections** in your portfolio. Are grantees working on similar projects? Can they learn from each other? Look for synergies and possible collaborations.
- Promote use of **Open Source and Open Data**. Advise your grantee to stay away from software and systems that will lock in their data and provide problems with portability in the future.

Integrating “Evaluation” and Learning

In order to avoid merely reacting to events, as advocacy organisations are sometimes prone to do, you should use a process of continuous evaluation. Evaluating your work will provide you with basic information that will help you learn from all aspects of a project – learn to avoid making the same mistakes again, and learn to understand and replicate your successes.

Many organisations feel that they don't have the resources or the capacity to conduct in-depth evaluation, but evaluating your work and its results is the only way to improve your effectiveness, and therefore it should always be a priority. Evaluation should be built into your plans and your funding expectations from the start. The good news is that evaluation activities can be easy and low-cost, and you don't necessarily need outside expertise to conduct them properly! Steps one and two below will probably take the most concentrated time, maybe half a day's work at the outset of the project. After that, you should think of evaluation as an embedded activity that you can take responsibility for throughout the life of the project.

Look for key moments on your project's time-line: where is there a natural pause in which you can analyse what has just happened? What are the important events or milestones that should trigger feedback? And remember: evaluating and understanding where your project has failed, and which tasks were not accomplished successfully, will provide you with excellent opportunities for reflection and learning, and improve your subsequent work.

Step 1:

Review your goals



Your theory of change and your strategic plan will help you establish exactly what you are evaluating. How are you expecting your technology project to help you achieve your strategic goals? What is the principal outcome you envisage for your tech project, and what are the other effects you'd like it to have? How will your project help bring about progress toward the changes you are advocating?

Thinking about these things should lead you to tough and specific evaluation questions; for example: "Did the text messages we sent succeed in stimulating our constituents to take action?"; "Is our intended audience actually able to use our data portal?"; "In what precise way is this work contributing to greater government or corporate accountability?"

Be alert to the possibility that your goals may change as your project and your evaluation of its results evolve. Take note of the moments in your project's life-span when you learn something that changes your outlook, and what exactly triggers that change. Pay attention to the context (political, socio-economic, cultural) around your project, and how that changes as it progresses. Which changes in the surrounding context are due to your work? Which are the result of factors that are beyond your control? You can learn a great deal, even from the things that you cannot control.

Step 2:

Determine a baseline



Before you start implementing your project, make sure you know how your issue stands now, in the status quo before your project begins. This knowledge will provide you with a starting point, or baseline, from which you can track progress. Establishing this might require a series of interviews to determine how people feel about the accountability of their government, or a measurement of how many people are currently using the relevant data, for example. Finding out how things stand before your project is instigated will allow you to track your progress from this baseline.

Once you've worked out the baseline of the current state of the issue that your project seeks to resolve or address, you should think about what the potential positive outcomes of the project might be. What will your tech project allow you to do that you wouldn't be able to do otherwise? How will it bring value for users and for other people or groups? What will it allow them to do that they couldn't do otherwise? Answering these questions will help you to think about the results that you hope to achieve, and how to measure them. You should also think about any potentially negative or unintended consequences that your project might trigger. Answering these questions will allow you to identify any risks and how to track them.

Step 3:

Determine metrics



Metrics are the methods you use to conduct your measurements of your project's effects. Think about how you will measure your success. It may be a question of analysing the number of new users your project reaches, say, or you might be hoping that your project will bring about changes in people's behaviour. In the latter case the indicators of success would not be expressible in numbers only. For example, "We want our data to be used by investigative journalists. What impact will they have? How exactly will their use of these data help reduce corruption and increase accountability?" The answers to these questions may not be quantifiable, but it is important to be able to observe changes.

Nevertheless, don't be afraid of numbers. When you're thinking about establishing quantitative goals, remember that you want the numbers you're aiming for to be realistic, not aspirational – this is for you and not for a funder! Think clearly about your organisation's capacities, and try not to over-reach yourselves. While the hard-to-quantify metrics of behaviour are great, making yourself back them up with numbers for the results that CAN be quantified will force you to set parameters that you can use later to judge your success. You will probably start by using metrics that measure the unquantifiable aspects of your work, but the trick is then to put the numbers in to support them and add another dimension.

What are the measurable aspects of the project? Can you turn those aspects into numbers? What would be the quantifiable minimum effects that you could expect from your project? For example, if you're hoping for a hard-to-quantify change in media awareness, you might decide that it would be realistic to expect at least a 10% increase in news stories by investigative journalists using your data as a source. When your project arrives at one of the natural pauses in its life-span, whether you've reached the minimum quantitative goal you'd set yourselves or not, it's important to understand what factors contributed to your success or failure.

Step 4:

Create an evaluation plan



Decide ahead of time when you will conduct evaluations as your project progresses. Create criteria that will help you trigger reflection and metric measurement as and when they occur. Are there events or activities on your project's timeline after which you know you will be able to pause, debrief and capture key measurements?

Rather than making evaluation a major task that you undertake all at once at the end of your project, think of all of your evaluation work as something easy and necessary that you undertake fairly regularly throughout the implementation of the project. Look for key milestones in your project's progress – moments when it would be useful to debrief yourselves and ask, "How did that go? What happened, exactly? What was unexpected, what worked as we'd foreseen? What could we do to improve the process?"

Think about who else should be asked to provide feedback, outside your own group. If your tech project is intended for use by people beyond your organisation, think about which of the intended users should be invited to feed back, which would be willing to do so, and what provisions would make it easiest for them to give you the information that would be most useful.

Step 5:

Implement your tech project (and your evaluation plan)



Make sure you integrate the things you learn from your evaluation activities into your project as it progresses.

Store your evaluation findings securely but accessibly. Use a spread-sheet or other document that you will be able to access for future reference, particularly when you're planning future projects or making reports to your funders. And make sure you are routinely backing up those documents!

Most importantly, use your evaluations to learn how to be more effective!

Having a light-touch evaluation plan will help you fine-tune your technology projects as you implement them. This kind of evaluation process will not depend on having additional funding or hiring an outside evaluator. However, you may need to undertake more robust evaluations, where you are having to prove the effectiveness of your project or organisation to external entities. If this is the case, you should definitely consider hiring a consultant to provide an objective outlook on your project and its evaluation, and you should also be prepared to raise separate funds to cover the costs of this.

Appendix: Stakeholder Mapping & Power Analysis

Note: This is adapted from The Half Wheel & The Pyramid, which originally appeared on the Fabriider website.

Understanding how any technology that you use in campaigning functions as a tactic to further your campaign strategy is essential. For every training session that Fabriiders runs, whether it's about data visualisation or social media, we've found it important to start with an exercise that brings participants back to thinking about the goals of their campaigns and the tactics that might bring those goals closer. This training curriculum has been evolving over the last four years and started as a **basic campaign strategy session**, developed for workshops that accompanied Tactical Tech's '10 Tactics' documentary.



What participants will get from this training session:

- An opportunity to define and categorise the types of stakeholders they are engaging through their campaigns.
- An understanding of the strategy needed to reach the goals of their campaign.
- The opportunity to identify and prioritise ways of applying technological tools tactically.

The Campaign Goal

Make sure that the people taking part in the training session understand how a campaign and its goals are defined in this context: a campaign goal is time-limited and achievable. Rather than aiming to "end hunger", we would suggest something more specific and measurable, such as, "establish a food bank in a community", or, "get the government to set aside funds for a school lunch program to feed students".

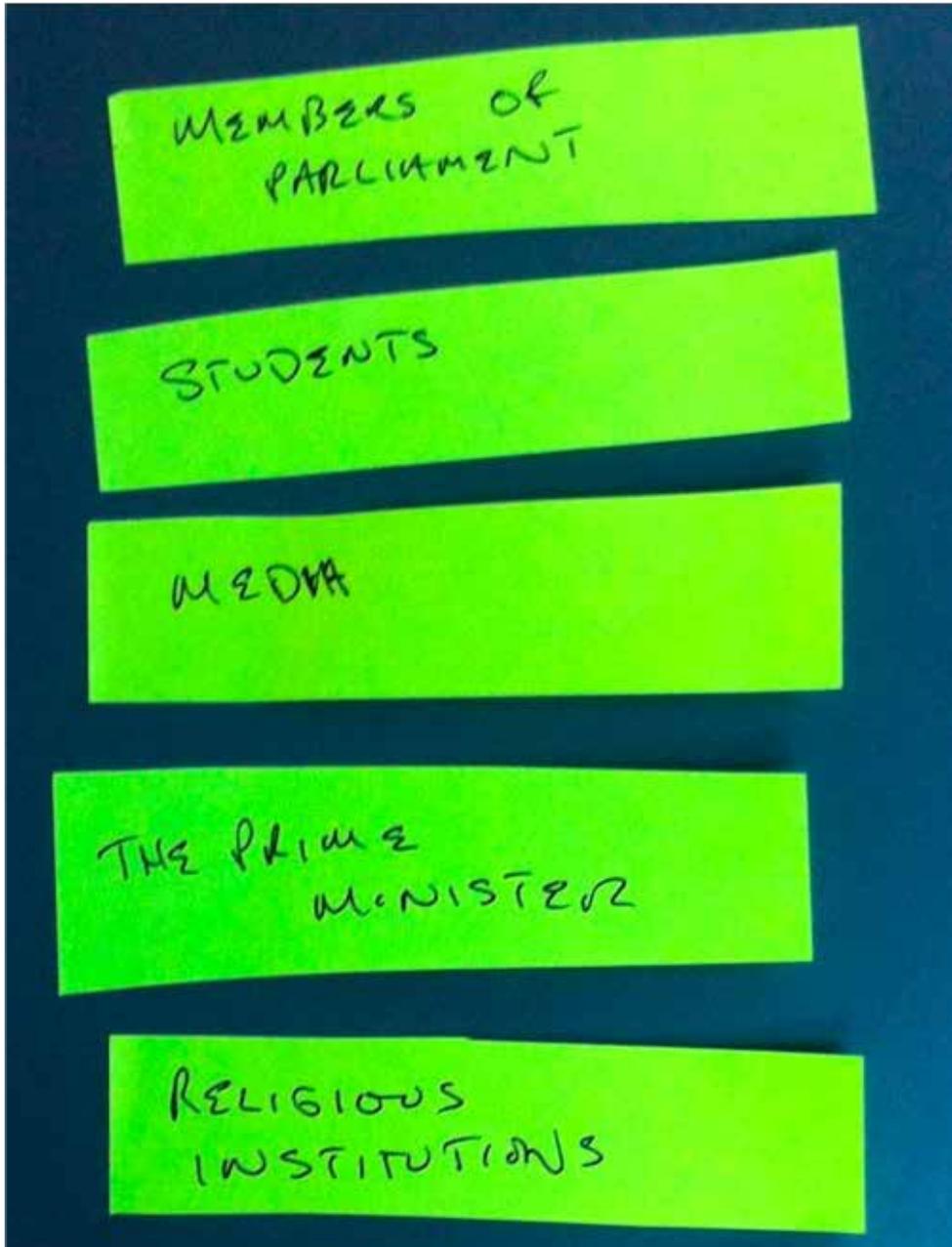
Ask the participants to state their campaign goals in one sentence.

Step 1:

Stakeholders

Make sure the participants understand what a stakeholder is. Stakeholders are all the people who are engaged with and affected by the issue/s around which they are campaigning; for example, members of the communities concerned, the press and media, government officials, etc.

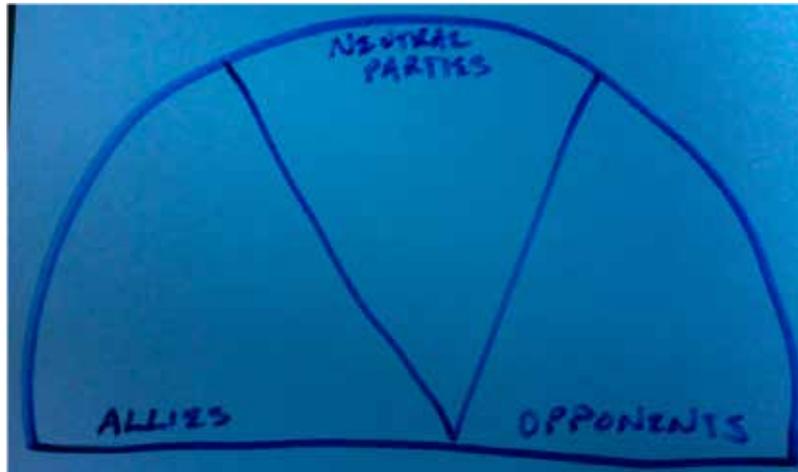
Now, ask the participants to list all the stakeholders involved in the campaign, writing the name of each stakeholder on a separate post-it note.



Step 2:

The Half Wheel

Next, the participants should take a big piece of paper and draw a half wheel on it, dividing it into three parts, for allies, neutral parties, and opponents.



Ask the participants to arrange the post-it notes on which they've noted the stakeholders in their campaign around the half-wheel according to these categories:

- **Allies** are people who are already engaged and support the campaign.
- **Neutral Parties** are people who neither oppose nor support the campaign
- **Opponents** are people who actively oppose the campaign

Some of the stakeholders that they've listed may fall into more than one category according to circumstances – if so, place them on the border line between the two categories.



Allies are the people they need to **mobilise**.

Neutral Parties are the people they need to **educate** (to transform them into Allies).

Opponents are the people whose arguments and actions they need to **counter**.

Stakeholders who lie on the line between Neutral Parties and Allies are the people they need to **motivate**, to make them into Allies.

Those who are between Opponents and Neutral Parties are the people that they need to persuade to **reconsider** their positions.

Stakeholders and activities

Now engage the participants in a discussion about each type of stakeholder, and about activities that can be undertaken with each: this will help participants to identify the right tactic to use for each of their stakeholders.

Allies – Mobilise!

Call on them to attend a protest, rally or meeting

Get them to put information out through their own networks

Get them to engage Neutral Parties and Opponents

Neutral Parties – Educate

Give them the information they need. What are creative ways to get information out to Neutral Parties via mobile phones, for example?

Engage them in getting information that is needed for the campaign. Actively engaging neutral parties in data gathering is a great way of educating them and turning them into active Allies

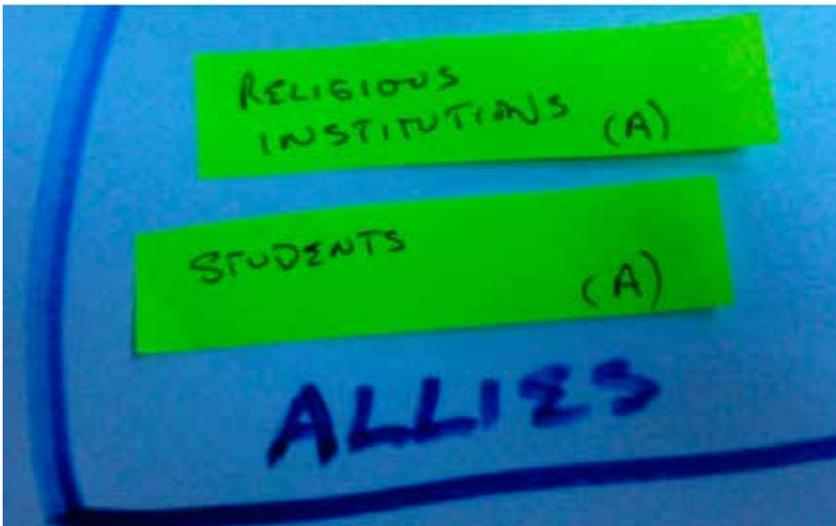
Opponents – Counter

Engage Opponents in face-to-face meetings and Forums. Counter the arguments that they present in debate.

Use Allies to engage Opponents

Use Neutral Parties to educate and to engage Opponents.

Now, ask the participants to look at how they've organised their stakeholders, and annotate each post-it note accordingly, writing A for Allies, N for Neutral, and O for Opponents. For stakeholders who fall into more than one category, include them both (A/N; N/O).



Step 3:

The Pyramid

Now it's time to build a pyramid using the post-it notes along with the annotations showing where they lie on the half wheel. Before you start, you need to work out: what is power? And: who has power in this situation? The ultimate question is: **Who has the power to make the**

change that you seek? This may be one individual, who will make a final decision, sign a law or change an existing policy: the head of a government committee or a regulatory body, say. It might also be the head of a corporation or the chairperson of a governing board. Participants should identify who can make the actual decision that's necessary, the entity or person who would have to say 'yes' or approve a law in order for the desired change to happen.

This person or entity should already be on the list of stakeholders, but if they are not, you should make a post-it note for them and put it on the half-wheel, noting where they fall on the wheel. Add a 'P' for 'power' to the post-it note, too.

Now the participants can remove the post-it notes from the half-wheel, and, with a fresh sheet of paper, create a Pyramid, with the stakeholder who has the power to bring about the desired change at the top. Directly below them, they'll put the stakeholders who have a direct connection to the stakeholder with power, and directly below them will go the stakeholders who are connected to them... participants should place all their post-it notes in this way.

This may not form the most perfect pyramid, but the participants should now be able to see who *THE PRIORITY STAKEHOLDERS ARE*.

Look at the powerful stakeholder at the top of the pyramid. Is this person or entity an Opponent, a Neutral Party or an Ally?

If they are an Ally, you are in good shape.

If they are an Opponent, you have some work to do. Getting them to do something they are opposed to is hard work. You'll need to look at the stakeholders below them in the pyramid and consider tactics that will reach these people and persuade them to influence the person at the top.

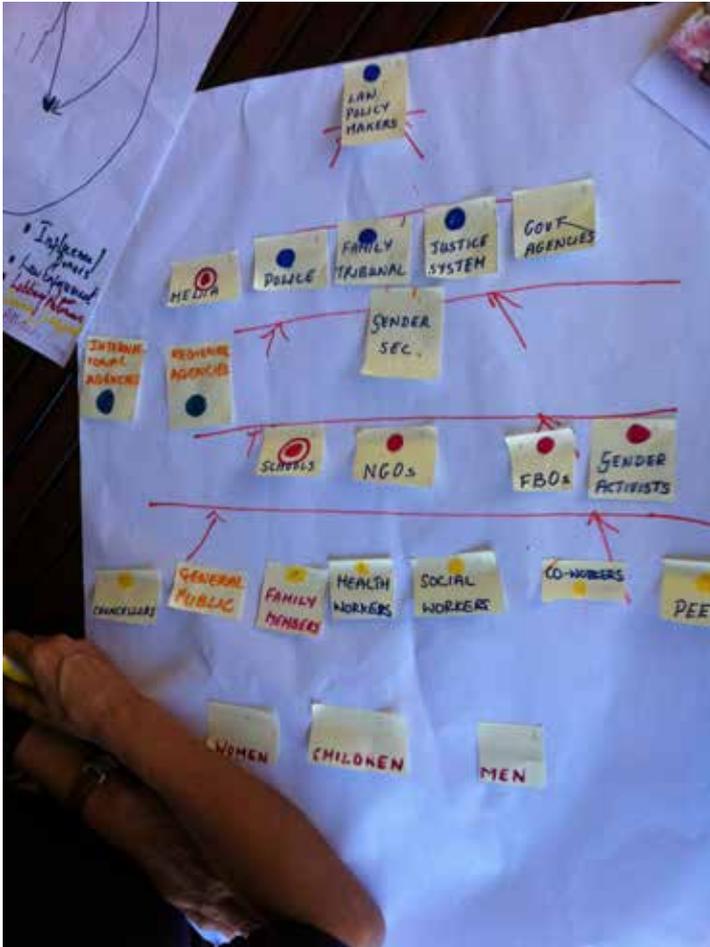
Another, optional, step at this point would be for the participants to invert the pyramid by putting themselves at the top and then putting the stakeholders they have direct relationships with below themselves and proceed as before, in order more clearly to see their path to the stakeholder with power.

More exercises on influencing stakeholders will appear on Fabriders in the near future.

Just a note: This is a simplified version of power analysis, and there are certainly many more robust or complex methods. If this exercise seems too simple for your purposes, you may want to look at one of these resources:

The Change Agency's training resources on **Campaign Strategy**

ACE's Power Analysis exercise



Appendix: Ensuring that your Tech Project is Usable

One of the key lessons we emphasise in our **blogs, presentations and reports** is the need for a user-centred approach to designing tech-enabled transparency projects. These projects should be based on audiences first and tools second.

Here are six practical steps, inspired by **Aspiration Tech**, to help you put these theories into practice when planning your next tech project:

1. **Articulate who would use your system, and how.** Get a lot of detail about the intended consumers and producers within your “virtual marketplace”. Once you’ve identified those actors, make a simple analysis of how they would be likely to interact with your system; for example, if one type of user would be a policy maker in a specific context, what would that person need from you in order to get her or his job done? Don’t forget that you’ll also attract anonymous generic users as well as various distinct and more engaged audiences. Once you’ve identified the audiences you expect, and think you understand them, go out and find people who match those descriptions and ask them, “Does this image of an audience look like you, and does this project look like something you truly, honestly need?” Only if the answer is yes, then...
2. **Get some of the target users of your system involved early** – much earlier than you might think. It’s a good idea to involve them in a small prototype or pilot version of your project first, or you may find you’ve left your users behind and diverged from their actual needs. Take a community-organising approach to building a project. Identify users who can feed their ideas, needs and input into your project strategy and design from the outset, then enlist them as pilot testers. The beauty of this approach is that you will then have a ready-made audience for when your project or product is finally launched.
3. **Linger in the problem space:** To save yourself time, money and heartache later on, you must start by devoting a lot of time and mental energy to working out what you need and DON’T need, and to making sure you understand as exactly as possible what your target users really want. Fortunately, and also unfortunately, new technology is the latest shiny sexy thing and it’s very easy to find people to tell you that they can build you a sexy shiny thing. It’s much more difficult to get them to build the thing that offers the most value, and that will be used consistently and fruitfully by the people that you are trying to serve.
4. **Getting your tech vendor, consultant or implementer involved early on in the project is not necessarily in your best interests:** The key lesson here is to be realistic about the way tech markets work: the truth is that many tech vendors are in the business of getting “solutions” accomplished in the shortest possible time, so they can move on to their next project. After all, these people have a business to run. They have little or no vested interest, nor any incentives to “linger in the problem space”. You will want your technology strategies to be realistic, properly focused and structured in a way that allows them to meet the needs of the people you are trying to help. You will know how to do this better than your contracted web developer does, so you should definitely think through the strategy issues very carefully and before you engage vendors. To start you off, you should...
5. **Write a very short version of “A day in the Life Of This Platform...”** Or, in technical terms, articulate what would be the operational flow of information getting in to and out of the system you wish to build. You want to tease out some of the details of who would want to use the system and what you might provide so that it’s useful for them. The questions below are a good starting point:
 - o Describe what sort of data someone would come to your site for
 - o Describe what they’d see when they arrive at the site
 - o Describe the sequencing steps they would take to search and/or browse through the data
 - o Describe in simple terms how the data might be sorted or collated (by region, by date, country, sector, size, etc.)

- o Describe what results would look like and how they would use the results
- o Describe the feedback process: how would people use results and then provide feedback on how to improve them.
- o And from the providers' point of view, describe the process of sourcing that information and getting it up on the site

Many NGOs have quite visionary ideas, but these ideas don't always have a natural starting point. By actively imagining what your platform or intervention will look like both from the point of view of the user and that of the provider, you will begin to concretise some of those visionary ideas. And finally...

6. **Start small and build incrementally.** Take things one step at a time, and make sure with each step that you're still on course; rather than trying to build some giant platform straight away with all kinds of bells and whistles, ask yourself, "What is the smallest useful version of this that could be built immediately?" Try to create what product developers and marketing experts like to call the "Minimum Viable Product" or MVP.

We've found these 6 steps to be very helpful in thinking through plenty of projects, but we're keen to get your thoughts and hear about your own experiences.

Helpful Useability Resources

- GOV.UK's Government Digital Services:
 - o Design Principles: <https://www.gov.uk/design-principles>
 - o Exploring user needs: <https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2012/10/09/exploring-user-needs/> and
 - o Writing user stories <https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2012/10/09/exploring-user-needs/>

Appendix: Integrating Mobiles into your Comms Strategy

The use of mobile devices is best seen as a tactic; you should use them to support an advocacy strategy within a well-established network, or to enhance existing relationships inside a broader campaign. Try to choose your approach, and the tools you use, on the basis of the strategic value they can bring to your campaign. Remember, there is no single tool that will address all your needs, and mobile communications exist in a fast-changing environment, in which a tool or tactic that works on one occasion might not necessarily work a second time.

The design of any intervention using mobile technologies should be based on an understanding of the way the audience you are trying to reach uses these devices. Be clear about who you want to engage, and also about what you want them to do as a result of your communications. Patterns of mobile phone use are very different among different groups; for example, younger and older people often use their phones in very different ways. This means you can, and should, tailor your interventions and messaging for different target groups.

The way you structure your intervention should also be informed by the kind and amount of information you are trying to get across to your audiences; for example, through SMS blast campaigns; or else by the nature of the information you are trying to get back from the communities you work with, from a survey, for example.

Here are some important questions to ask about reaching people with mobiles:

1. Who do you want to engage with, and what do you want them to do as a result of your communication? Profile your audiences.
2. Is your communication going to be one-way (disseminating information, or providing updates on a campaign) or two-way (conducting a survey, documenting what's happening on the ground, coordinating actions and protests)? Decide on tactics.
3. Do you have mobile numbers for all of your supporters? Assess the state of your contact list.
4. Does the mobile technology you want to use match the capabilities of your audience's phones? Identify the capabilities of the handsets your audience uses.
5. Is your database of contact numbers stored securely? Do you and the people you work with know about and practice optimum mobile security? Don't forget security and legal issues.

Start with free or low-cost pilot projects: try sending a message to supporters and asking them to forward it, or set up a system using missed calls as signals. Do some research into potential partnerships with organisations that are working in your sector, or that have related campaigning or advocacy goals.

For more useful information on mobiles see:

- <http://howto.informationactivism.org/content/mobile-tips>
- <http://booktype-demo.sourcefabric.org/freedomfone/know-your-audience/>

Appendix: Understanding Data Advocacy

Data is all around us

Look at this Apple.

Your first thought might be, 'yummy apple.' But if you are encountering the apple in a store, you might be interested in data about the apple. Such as:



Type: Cox	Location Picked: Kent	Size: 50 grams
Date picked: 10/09/2013	Price: 50 pence	

You might also be interested in nutritional data, such as:

Amount Per 100 grams			
Calories 52			
Total Fat 0.2 g		0%	
Saturated fat 0 g		0%	
Polyunsaturated fat 0.1 g			
Monounsaturated fat 0 g			
Cholesterol 0 mg		0%	
Sodium 1 mg		0%	
Potassium 107 mg		3%	
Total Carbohydrate 14 g		4%	
Dietary fiber 2.4 g		9%	
Sugar 10 g			
Protein 0.3 g		0%	
Vitamin A	1%	Vitamin C	7%
Calcium	0%	Iron	0%
Vitamin D	0%	Vitamin B-6	0%
Vitamin B-12	0%	Magnesium	1%

Now take a bushel of apples:



The data we first want to know might be similar to when we go to buy an apple:

Type: Braeburn Location picked: Kent Date: 10/09/2013

However if I'm a wholesale buyer and want to know what sort of profit I can get. I'll want to know the following:

Price per kilo from farmer: 1 pound 25 pence Price per kilo at market: 2 pounds

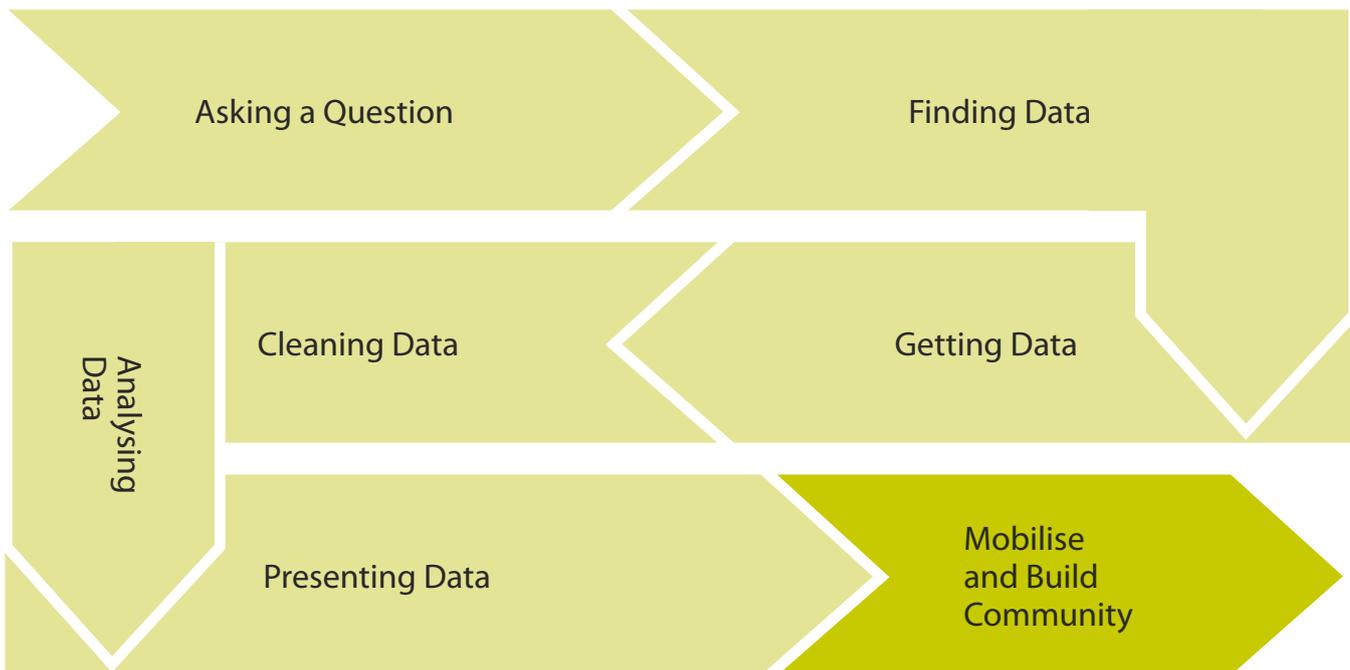
If I'm a farm labourer, there is different data about the bushel that I would want to know:

Price paid per bushel picked: 75 pence Average time taken to pick a bushel: 8.5 minutes

Relevant data varies from the consumer, the merchant to the farm labourer. The relevant data to advocates change dramatically depending on the issue. Perhaps they are advocating for better eating habits among children, or against price fixing in a store or better pay for farm labourers.

The key to effective data advocacy is to understand the difference between data and evidence. Data is discrete pieces of information, such as prices, measurements, dates, names of places and people, and addresses. Evidence is when data is used to establish facts or expose truth. For activists and advocates, the ability to take relevant data and turn it into evidence is the key to creating change.

Here are the basic steps that advocates go through when using data:



Common challenges that transparency and accountability organisations face when using data in advocacy:

1. Organisations often collect information and data without knowing what is relevant or what they could do with the data. They don't always know the potential of the data, particularly in regards to turning it into evidence.
2. Often an institutional structure to hold the data and package it effectively does not exist. Organisations often don't fully understand what it will take to effectively use data before they undertake a data project.
3. It can be very difficult in translating technical data on policy issues like budgets into terms that make the connection to real people's lives.
4. Organisations often don't understand that the power of data is not just something that is in a spreadsheet – but it is also in people's stories, images, audio recordings, etc.
5. The value in getting data directly from citizens or stakeholders that are impacted by the issue

A Data Advocacy Checklist

Since data is not enough to convince decision makers, you need to organise it into evidence and connect it to a larger advocacy strategy. To get past these challenges answer the following questions:

- Do you have clear advocacy goals?
- Have you identified who will be connecting to the data?
- Do you know the work that the data needs to do? Are you using it to engage allies? Educate neutral parties? Or counter opponents?
- Do you have the capacity to aggregate and analyse the data?
- Do you know creative ways to package data that will help stakeholders connect and engage?
- Can you provide your stakeholders with a way to GET INVOLVED with the data?
- Do you have capacity to crowd-source data from stakeholders?

- Do you need to work with an external consultant/developer?
 - o You don't need a developer when:
 - you can use a spread-sheet to work with your data
 - you can use tools to manipulate data that are already made without needing to write code to use them
 - o You do need a developer if:
 - you need to combine data in a more complex way
 - you need to get data through a web service in an automatic way
 - you are working with a big amount of data
 - you need to discover patterns in a data set
 - you need to visualize real time data

Gabriela Rodriguez's handy list of tools that anyone can use to work with data:

Finding Data

- Many Data Portals
 - o <http://datahub.io/>
 - o <http://data.worldbank.org/>
- Open Street Map: <http://openstreetmap.org>
- Creative Commons Media: <http://search.creativecommons.org/>

Getting Data

- ScraperWiki: <https://classic.scrapewiki.com/>
- Tabula: <http://tabula.nerdpower.org/> & <http://tabula.datauy.org>
- Wikileaks: <http://wikileaks.org>

Cleaning Data

- Spreadsheet (openoffice, google docs)
- Open Refine: <http://openrefine.org/> & orefine.datauy.org

Presenting Data

- CartoDB: <http://cartodb.com/>
- MapBox: <https://www.mapbox.com/>
- Timeliner: <http://timeliner.okfnlabs.org>
- Wordle: <http://www.wordle.net/>

Forums and Community in Internet

- School of data: <http://ask.schoolofdata.org/questions/>
- Stackoverflow: <http://data.stackexchange.com/stackoverflow/queries>
- Geographical Information forum: <http://gis.stackexchange.com/>
- TA Bridge mailing list: <http://lists.transparency-initiative.org/lists/info/tech-discuss>

What exists above is a grouping of resources on using data in advocacy that was generated from a variety of TABridge events, including a session led by Jed Miller at the Glen Cove, NY meeting in November, 2012 and a webinar on October 23rd, 2013 with Lucy Chambers, Gabriela Rodriguez and Dirk Slater.

