

Circuit Rider Project

follow up evaluation

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by adpconsultancy



Supported by



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Executive summary

The Circuit Rider Project

The Lasa Circuit Rider Project was set up in May 2005 to support a number of voluntary and community sector organisations to build their ICT capacity.

The term circuit rider is an umbrella term used to describe ICT professionals primarily working in the voluntary and community sector. Lasa has worked for a number of years using the circuit rider model to help organisations access support on ICT that is flexible and affordable.

Circuit riders can offer a range of skills, including strategic development, technical support, training and action planning. The Circuit Rider Project provided a number of support functions to assist organisations to:

- Address specific ICT issues;
- Develop ICT strategies;
- Increase awareness of ICT costs and funding opportunities;
- Work together to share information and experiences; and
- Increase knowledge and awareness of ICT.

The evaluation process

This is a follow up report to the Circuit Rider Project full evaluation, undertaken by ADP Consultancy, and completed in March 2007.

The evaluation involved a series of short semi-structured telephone interviews with a sample of eight of the organisations that had taken part in the Circuit Rider Project. The questionnaire was geared towards obtaining information on how organisations had progressed their work with ICT in the six months following the end of the support provided by the Circuit Rider Project.

Key findings

Overall capacity to manage ICT

- The confidence of the majority of key contacts in managing their organisation's ICT capacity has continued to grow largely due to the achievements they made while participating in the Circuit Rider Project.
- To maintain confidence staff need to continue to work on ICT issues on a regular basis. Those staff that have continued to address ICT issues and implement ICT projects tend to be more confident than those who have done less work following the end of the project.
- Organisations would benefit from the ongoing provision of independent information, advice and support on ICT issues. For most organisations this could simply be a matter of having someone whose views they valued and trusted available to discuss issues over the telephone.

Action planning

- All of the organisations interviewed have continued to work on ICT following the end of the Circuit Rider Project, although progress has been varied across organisations from the completion of large-scale projects to generally maintaining the things that had been put in place during the project.
- The planning tools developed during the project continue to be used to inform organisations' use of ICT, with the Action Plan the most commonly used tool.
- Confidence levels on planning are lower than for managing the organisation's ICT capacity. The majority of organisations suggest that they would benefit from ongoing support for ICT planning within their organisations.

Strategic development

- Organisations have tended to make limited progress on strategic analysis and planning since the end of the Circuit Rider Project. This is partly due to the timing of this work that was carried out prior to organisations starting their planning process, but also due to organisations having limited time and resources and the impact of other priorities.

1 Introduction

This is a follow up report to the Circuit Rider Project full evaluation, undertaken by ADP Consultancy, and completed in March 2007¹. This work involved revisiting a sample of the organisations that participated in the Circuit Rider Project with the intention of identifying any further progress they have made in implementing the use of ICT, based on the main components of the Circuit Rider Project, within their organisations.

The report is based on a series of short, semi-structured interviews with the sample organisations to identify ongoing work in a number of key areas of ICT use, development and support. The report aims to inform Lasa, the circuit rider community, funders and other interested parties of:

- The lasting effects of the interventions of the Circuit Rider Project on the sample organisations; and
- What else organisations consider could be done to assist them in their work with ICT in the longer term.

2 The evaluation process

In consultation with the Circuit Rider Project Team, ADP produced a short questionnaire² for use in the interviews with the sample organisations. The questionnaire was geared towards obtaining information on the following key areas:

- Overall capacity to manage ICT
- Action planning
- Strategic planning
- Technical support
- Resources and help
- Future support needs and circuit rider development
- ‘Good news’ stories

In addition, participating organisations were given the opportunity to provide additional information regarding their work on ICT that they considered relevant.

ADP arranged and carried out telephone interviews with the following organisations³:

- Advisory Centre for Education
- Age Concern Hounslow
- Arachne Greek Cypriot Women’s Group
- Black and Ethnic Minority Community Care Forum
- Disability Advice Service Lambeth
- Environmental Law Foundation
- New Avenues Youth and Community Project
- Southwark Diocesan Welcare

The agencies were selected as a result of discussions between ADP and the Circuit Rider Project Team to obtain a cross-section of organisations based on their activities, size, location and both their current use and future plans for ICT work identified during the Circuit Rider Project.

1 The full evaluation report is available at www.lasa.org.uk/circuitriders.
2 The questionnaire is available at Appendix I.
3 Details of the participating organisations are available at Appendix II.

