



Sustaining citizen centric services means...

- A long term and sustainable approach to tackling the issues of digital inclusion and citizen centric services
- Helping people to become confident users of new technology and on-line services
- Changing public services so as to focus them on the needs of citizens rather than the needs of the organisation

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for comment

Getting to where we are

now:

Citizen First ran a number of different pilot projects with the aim of trialing new ways of:

- Helping to change mainstream practice by demonstrating more effective ways of delivering objectives within existing funding
- Developing sustainable models where costs are cut and benefits sufficiently increased that the case for continuation funding is made

The approach needed to support change and develop sustainable models:

- Sharing costs through multi-agency provision
- Community ownership
- Use of volunteers
- Partnership with the private sector

Changing mainstream practice

Avoid viewing the project in isolation and setting objectives which relate to the project itself. Instead:

1. Identify at the outset the mainstream objectives of your own organisation and those of partner organisations which could be addressed by the project being planned
2. Systematically assemble evidence of how the project addresses these objectives – in particular, show how the project can contain costs or perform more efficiently than the existing methods
3. Communicate these benefits effectively to key decision-makers within your own organisation and those of its partners
4. Refocus the evaluation and monitoring effort away from project objectives and on to evidence that can be used to help change mainstream practice within the project partnership

Cambridgeshire's Community Access Points show how this can be achieved. Instead of focusing their monitoring and evaluation on CAPs themselves, the team is gathering evidence related to:

- CAPs' effectiveness in delivering e-Government services and services in general to isolated and difficult to reach people and communities, especially in rural areas
- CAPs' suitability for acting as delivery points for other services – for example, health-related services, information from police, fire, ambulance and other State agencies
- The benefits that could flow to actual and potential funding agencies and service providers from using CAPs to deliver their respective agendas



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Practitioners are invited to contribute experiences, news and
comment to Citizen-First@mwra.ie

Other approaches to funding initiatives until they can be mainstreamed or otherwise adopted

Sharing costs by multi-agency provision

This can be a solution to demonstrating long-term effectiveness before funding can be formally secured. Clearly, different partners add value to a project, for example in the breadth of services provided. But partners themselves need to be shown that value will be added to their own activities by entering partnership and sharing costs in the medium term. Achieving this has something of the 'brokering' function about it.

Cambridgeshire is investigating this further and we expect further project reports and evaluations in due course.

Community ownership

It may be possible to place the resources deployed under community ownership. The advantage then is that the partner community may be able to access a wider range of funding options, not just statutory ones. Importantly, it also builds directly the local sense of owning the project or facility.

Ieper has achieved this using 'godparents' for some of its Public Internet Access Points. In **Cambridgeshire**, they are investigating completely new sorts of community organisations to take their CAP projects forward. It is already clear that, by positioning a facility under the ownership of the community rather than a local authority, it becomes easier for other agencies to use the facility to deliver their services.

Use of volunteers

Self-evidently, reliance on volunteers means that costs are reduced. However, volunteers are neither a free resource nor a reliably replenishable source of help. Volunteers expect and are entitled to respect and good quality support. Volunteers need understanding and sensitive handling because they can always walk away from situations they feel are becoming uncomfortable. Experience also suggests that if volunteers walk away, they rarely come back.

Consequently, identified members of your employed staff must be tasked with volunteer liaison

and support. Their purpose is to ensure that volunteers feel valued and are provided with the resources to do a good job.

Partnership with the private sector

Any partnership between the public and the private sector entails the provision of products, infrastructure or services which the public sector declines, or finds it inconvenient, to provide itself. The eventual user or customer must be at the heart of the concerns of the actors in such partnerships, as Citizen First is demonstrating.

A good example lies in the **Eindhoven's** 'Shopfront' project. The idea is that small communities, where essential services had been withdrawn because they were considered no longer viable, should set up a local facility enabling these services to be restored by being delivered remotely. The idea is sound and the technology works. However, the private sector partner company needed help and support in engaging with the local community to alleviate fears and to embed their investment. Citizen First funding has now ceased but the project is proceeding and is planned to be introduced more widely in the Netherlands.



Contacts, links and projects:

- Handbook for Citizen-centric eGovernment
- [Http://europa.eu.int/egovernment/research](http://europa.eu.int/egovernment/research)
- [Http://europa.eu/information_society/activities/einclusion/policy/egov/index_en.htm](http://europa.eu/information_society/activities/einclusion/policy/egov/index_en.htm)
- IDABC – Interoperable Delivery of European eGovernment Services to Public Administrations, Businesses and Citizens
- Information Society & eGovernment
- eGovernment Good Practice Network / Inclusive eGovernment
- www.citizen-first.net