

Recruiting citizens in times of global crisis

In times of pandemics, austerity, and other such restrictions on human freedoms, our approach to recruiting participants needs to shift. While online or distanced engagement will never replace in-person (as online can limit the ability to read emotion and limit space for emergent ideas) sometimes it is our only choice. In this infographic we present the barriers our project faced during the Covid-19 Pandemic and adaptations we made to continue with our work with citizens.

Challenges

Uncertainty

Difficulties around having to define a new approach in spite of all the uncertainties and without knowing which restrictions will be in place and for how long.

"It's difficult to recruit people if we can't give them timelines"
(CaseLead02)



Reaching certain groups

Recruiting some demographic groups, such as children and senior citizens is even more challenging online.



Online fatigue

In times of lockdown, participants see a huge increase in online events and mail-based communication. With everything moving online, people start getting tired of online/email engagement.



Changing priorities

Partnering local authorities and schools are faced with significant challenges in their daily activities, as their priorities shift to deal with the global crisis. This might mean original plans for engagement needs to be changed significantly.



Fear of face-to-face

If in person events are allowed, people are hesitant to attend due to concern for individual and collective safety.



Solutions

Prioritising participants' needs

While this should always be our priority, now is the time to be extra sensitive to the needs of those you wish to involve.

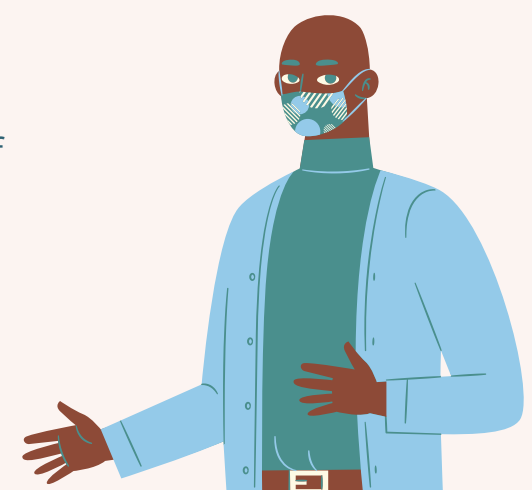


Re-focus and shift approach

Who is still active for the cause?
How can you work more collaboratively?

Consider targeting specific volunteer groups, leveraging activists and existing networks of contacts.

Have the project endorsed by local venues and institutions, as well as existing communities to build trust.



Explore indirect routes

Find ways to reach people indirectly. Liaise with community centres, schools and care homes, finding indirect routes to your audience. Make activities implementable by an intermediary (e.g. a teacher).



Campaign online

Make the most of the online environment to deliver a social media campaign or recruitment drive. Choose a platform that suits you and your audience and link with community organisations to reach them.



Engaging citizens in times of global crisis

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Challenges

Uncertainty

Planning workshops and events is very hard when society is having to react to constantly changing policies and Government advice.



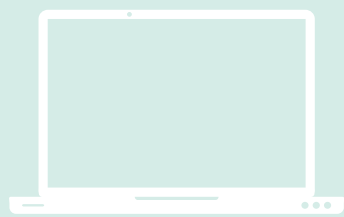
Reaching certain groups

Participants may struggle to access the technology (e.g. laptop, WiFi) or have trust issues with online engagement.



Digital skills

Not all participants (or staff members) have the same digital skills.



Balance

It is tricky to find the right size for an online workshop and still be able to reach the target number stipulated in your proposal. It's a balance between number of participants and number of workshops. The same goes for the number of emails your sending out!



Logistics

Difficulties are presented in terms of engaging in safe ways, in line with national guidelines, while wanting to make an initial face-to-face connection.



Solutions

Take a hybrid approach

Can you meet for a quick and safe initial face-to-face meeting, even outside?

Find ways to make in-person connections whilst adhering to the current rules and guidelines. This will set the foundations for better bonds within the group and between the groups and researchers.



Manage expectations

Carefully and closely manage participants expectations from the outset. Explain what is and isn't possible during this period, and be upfront about the uncertainties.



Make online intimate

Split participants into smaller groups/rooms during online sessions to allow everyone the chance to talk and share their opinions and stories. Get to know one another... pets included.

Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Eventbrite are all useful platforms for online events.

