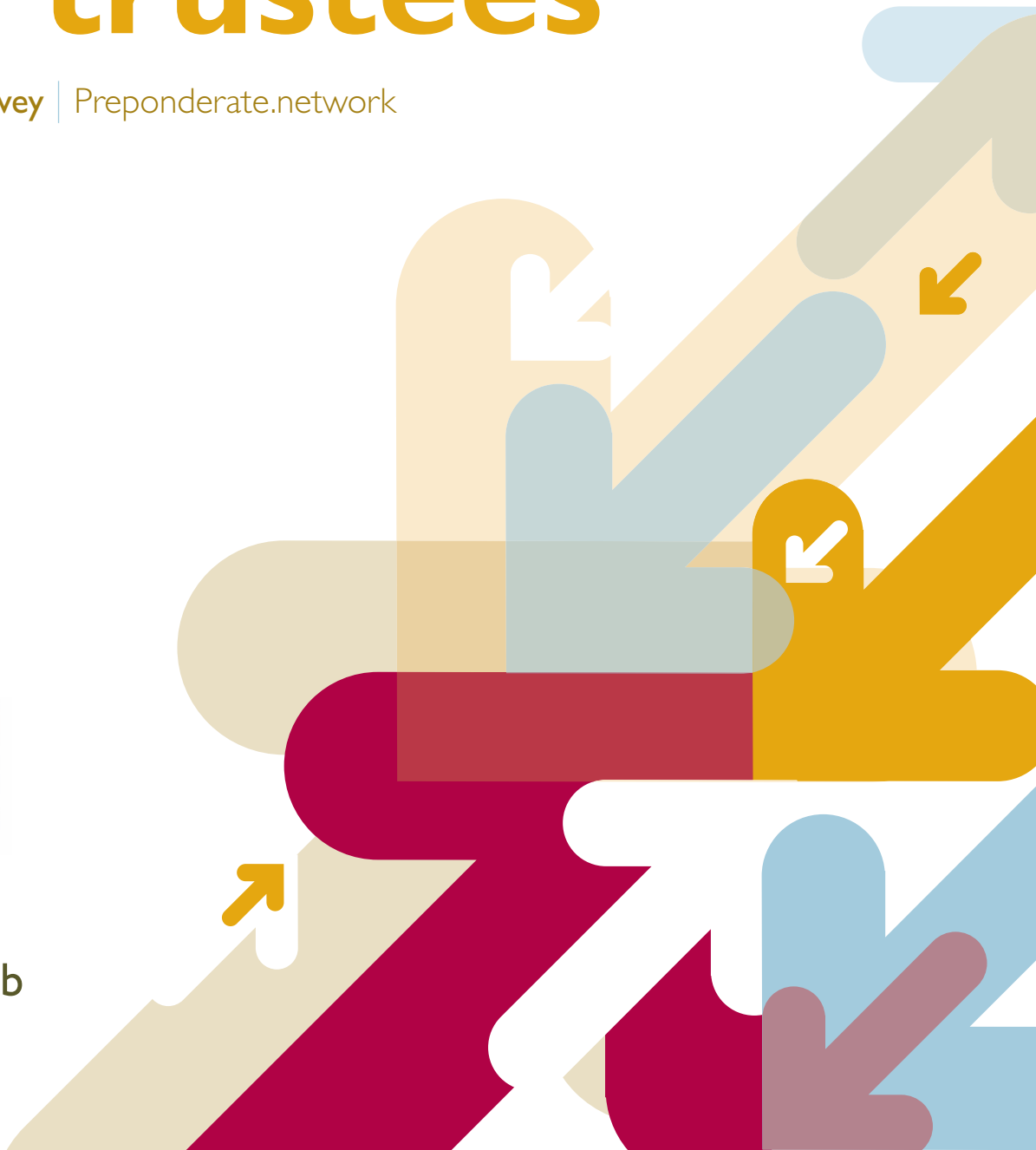


From Nightmare to Nirvana

An ICT survival guide for trustees

Dr Simon Davey | Preponderate.network



Published by NCVO

Regent's Wharf
8 All Saints Street
London N1 9RL

Published March 2008

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 UK: England & Wales Licence.

You are free: to copy, distribute, display, and perform the work under the following conditions:

Attribution

You must give the original author credit.

Non-Commercial

You may not use this work for commercial purposes.

No Derivative Works

You may not alter, transform, or build upon this work.

For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the licence terms of this work.

Any of these conditions can be waived if you get permission from the copyright holder.

Nothing in this licence impairs or restricts the author's moral rights.

Edited by **Louise Brown and Sarah King**

Designed by **www.wave.coop**

Printed by **Avenue Printing**

ISBN **978-0719917592**

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained within this publication. However, NCVO, the ICT Hub and Governance Hub cannot be held responsible for any action an individual organisation takes, or fails to take, as a result of this information.

Acknowledgements

ICT Governance has the potential to impact on everything an organisation does in society. It can support more effective working, better services and provide better value for money, and greater impact for beneficiaries. ICT Governance is at the heart of good ICT planning and management, and we need trustees to get involved, take on the challenge and reap the rewards.

The material in this guide is taken from a wide range of sources, not least the experiences of trustees working with small to medium sized voluntary and community organisations over a number of years. The more they put into ICT Governance, the more they were rewarded. I hope this guide helps inspire others to see ICT Governance with a passion, not for its own ends but for the impact it has on staff, beneficiaries and the mission of their organisations.

Thank you to everyone who contributed case studies, the reviewers and the reference group, especially Tony Okotie, Michael Dickson and Diana Parkinson for helpful feedback, advice and support. A special thank you to Louise Brown and Sarah King for feedback and support with editing – this publication is all the better for it.

Dr Simon N Davey

Preponderate.net
March 2008

About the author

Dr Simon Davey has worked in the voluntary sector with trustees and managers for eight years. He works as an independent consultant on a range of issues including organisational development, leadership, ICT strategy, information management, project management and volunteering. Simon also leads the preponderate.network, a group of ethical consultants 'making it easier for you to do what you do'. For more information, please visit **www.preponderate.net**

Introduction

You won't have failed to notice that technology is everywhere. We can't drive our cars, use our phones or buy our shopping without making use of at least one of the latest developments. Voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) are saving time, money and resources by making use of technology, but with that comes an increased responsibility for senior managers and trustees.

As a trustee you are responsible for guiding the direction of your organisation and that includes making strategic decisions about how you use technology. You don't need to manage hands on but you do need to understand enough to be sure that, having fully considered the financial and legal implications of integrating technology, you are making the right decisions for your organisation.

This guide will give you the knowledge and confidence to steer your organisation's use of ICT (information and communication technology) effectively. You will start by assessing your board's current actions around ICT and will then be led through putting together an ICT plan, coming to grips with ICT risk and ensuring you have the right policies and procedures in place. Finally you will discover how to use your ICT to help you govern more effectively.

Don't be put off if your board has never discussed ICT before; we've included all the background information you will need and checklists and exercises for you to complete. So why don't you schedule your first discussion and start to think about your role in managing your organisation's ICT.

Foreword

Very few of us can imagine a world without technology, but how well do we understand ICT and ensure it benefits the voluntary and community organisations or social enterprises that we govern?

We know from research that ICT is still one of the biggest needs in the voluntary and community sector and that organisations are still struggling with the basics. We also know from research that one of the biggest factors affecting how an organisation uses ICT is how their trustee board addresses this issue.

In our baseline research published in June 2007 organisations reported that where their board had ICT expertise, or had the necessary knowledge and confidence to bring someone in with these attributes, then the use of ICT was more effective.

This guide has been developed to give board members the expertise and confidence in making decisions about ICT, to help voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises benefit from ICT.

Whether you know a little or a lot about ICT, this guide will help you understand what your responsibilities are, how ICT can support good governance, and how you can help the organisation you govern benefit strategically from ICT.

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Nicky Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned over a light beige background that features a large, stylized number "4" shape.

Nicky Thompson

Head of the ICT Hub

The remarkable strides forward in ICT solutions in the last few years have changed our lives in so many ways. Communications technologies have started to make the world feel like a much smaller place – what matters now is not where you are, but how connected you can be. We are already starting to look back at our lives only ten or twenty years ago and wonder how we ever coped without all the gadgets we now take for granted.

As organisations, how we utilise ICT should be a key strategic issue. It presents opportunities to make an organisation's work more efficient and far-reaching, but also poses threats and potential liabilities, such as the legal compliance and confidentiality issues concerned with managing data. It is important that as trustees we respond proactively to our ever-changing world, and support our staff and volunteers to help them maximise the benefits and, of course, minimise the risks.

As trustees, we have a duty to lead by example. Are there new ICT solutions that would help us plan and administer our board meetings, data-handling and decision-making in a more effective way? How can we ensure that discussions about ICT developments are embedded in our governance work, and that changes come as a result of proactive exploration rather than reactive panic?

The Governance Hub is delighted to be working in partnership with the ICT Hub in providing what we hope you will find is a practical guide to help trustees deal with some of these issues. This is an important resource for the Governance Hub, because we see ICT as integral to our mission to improve the quality of governance across the voluntary and community sector.



Anne Moynihan

Head of Governance Hub

Getting the best out of this guide

This guide is designed to be a resource that you and your board can work through, chapter by chapter – practical workbook to stimulate your thinking on how technology can work for you. On reaching the end of the guide you will have the knowledge and confidence to support your organisation's use of ICT.

The guide is in three distinct parts:

Part A A background to ICT Governance

Part B A 'how to' guide

Part C A summary of standards and resources

You might not read this from cover to cover. You may dip in and out as and when you need to, but we strongly recommend someone in your organisation reads through the whole guide and draws up a list of action points.

There are some challenging issues raised in this guide but don't be put off; addressing them will help make your organisation more efficient, more effective, deliver better value and help support your role as a trustee.

Each chapter contains the following sections:

→ **What are you responsible for?** – What are your obligations as a trustee?

→ **Case studies** – Detailed information and advice



→ **Checklists** – What areas do you need to consider?



→ **Signposts** – Where can you go for further help?



→ **Key points** – What do you need to know?



→ **Action points** – What do you need to do?

So, if you can put aside a little time, why not make a start now? Remember, you'll need to take action to make a difference, so pencil in an agenda item for your next board meeting right now.

Working through the guide

Use the chart below to work through specific sections of the guide and schedule board discussions.

	Page	Section/ Info Read	Discussion Date	Action Points Completed
What has ICT got to do with governance? Why should trustees be interested in ICT?	12			
What can ICT do for you? ICT making a difference to you, your board and within your organisation	20			
Making ICT a priority for your organisation How do you support your organisation's use of ICT?	29			
Coming to grips with ICT risk Understanding the potential danger areas associated with ICT	40			
Ensuring the smooth running of your ICT What policies and procedures do you need to make sure are in place?	45			
Making your money go further Debunking the myths of ICT costs	50			
Leading from the front Supporting and enabling change in your organisation	55			

	Page	Section/ Info Read	Discussion Date	Action Points Completed
The future's bright The positive impact of new technology on your organisation	60			
Supporting yourselves Using ICT to strengthen governance practice and performance management	66			
Resources and support Where to find out more about ICT Governance	70			
Good ICT Governance – A Summary	72			



Our terminology

This is primarily a governance guide with a focus on ICT. Don't worry, we won't use technical terms (unless we have to) and we'll explain ourselves wherever and whenever we can.

Here are our definitions of commonly used terms in this guide

→ **Critical friend**

Someone who gives advice and support but also challenges and holds you accountable. They will celebrate successes and commiserate about failures and give honest feedback.

→ **Governance**

Refers to the way trustees work with senior managers and staff, volunteers and service users, members and other stakeholders to ensure their organisation is run effectively, meeting the needs for which it was set up.

→ **ICT**

Literally "Information and Communication Technology". Also known as IT, it refers to the tools we use to manage information and the way we communicate. Includes computers, the internet, telephones, faxes, mobile phones, websites and databases.

→ **Resources**

The time, money, people and equipment you need to make things happen.

→ **Return on investment**

What you get back for what you put in, e.g. the monetary value of time saved by providing a website for your clients.

→ **Total cost of ownership**

The complete cost of owning and operating something, including what you pay to buy it, run it, maintain it and dispose of it.

→ **Trustee**

An individual member of a trustee board, management committee, board of directors or member of a council of management.

→ **Trustee board**

A management committee, board of trustees or any governing group.

→ **VCO**

A voluntary and community organisation. This description covers all charities, membership organisations, social enterprises and local community groups.

For further terms please refer to www.ictHub.org.uk/managing_ICT/glossary.html

In the end, good ICT
Governance comes down
to good general governance,
sharing responsibilities and
being accountable.

Part A

A background to ICT Governance

12 1. What has ICT got to do with governance?

Why should trustees be interested in ICT?

12 What is ICT Governance?

13 A quick questionnaire

16 Examples of ICT Governance

20 2. What can ICT do for you?

ICT making a difference to you, your board and within your organisation

20 The benefits of well-managed ICT

22 Your role as a trustee – the nature of ICT Governance and leadership

24 Don't cut corners – the importance of ICT infrastructure

25 "But I hate technology" – why techno-phobes have a role to play





SECTION I

What has ICT got to do with governance?

Why should trustees be interested in ICT?

This guide is not about improving your technical understanding of ict. It's about:

- supporting you to better govern your VCO,
- improving your board and organisation's general understanding of ICT's role,
- supporting your board to make more informed decisions, and
- enabling ICT to support what your organisation does day to day.

Whether you're a committee member of a local voluntary group, a trustee of a major charity or a director of a social enterprise, this guide will help you:

- make more informed decisions,
- access relevant and meaningful information (and sources of support) quickly and easily,
- make a tangible impact quickly and noticeably,
- increase your confidence in ICT Governance, and
- help make a difference to organisational effectiveness and your impact on beneficiaries.

What is ICT Governance?

By governance we mean the way trustees work with senior managers and staff, volunteers and service users, members and other stakeholders to ensure their organisation is run effectively, meeting the needs for which it was set up.

ICT Governance is no different to the way you govern your organisation generally – it's simply about ensuring you think about ICT whenever you think about:

- risk management and general scrutiny,
- how you can better deliver services,
- employing staff and recruiting trustees,
- running a more effective and efficient organisation, and
- doing more to meet the needs of your beneficiaries.

Good governance is key to the health and sustainability of an organisation. As VCOs we are increasingly held accountable for our outcomes and expected to demonstrate how well we are governed. Efficient and transparent systems of governance really are of paramount importance.

The questions you answered are deliberately one-sided. If you answered YES to questions 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 13, you may not be getting the best out of your board when it comes to supporting ICT. Similarly if you answered NO to questions 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14, you may have room to improve. Chapters 3 to 9 show you how.

It might be useful to ask all your fellow trustees to complete this questionnaire and compare answers with you.

Take a look at our ‘perspectives’ below and see how this guide can support you.

Perspectives on the quick questionnaire

So what might your YES or NO answers mean?

	If you answered ‘YES’	For more information see:
1. We don’t need to know about ICT and have other priorities for our time.	Who does handle ICT for you? Who is managing risk and why is it not a priority for you?	Chapter 2
2. We believe ICT makes an important contribution to the mission of our organisation and we regularly discuss strategic issues.	If ICT is considered in your plans, you should reap the benefits.	Chapter 2
3. ICT is purely for technical people; it’s not our responsibility.	Technology is definitely best left to the techies but the strategic decisions remain in your hands.	Chapters 3 and 4
4. We hold staff directly accountable for ICT projects and support appropriate risk taking. We realise not everything turns out as expected.	You have a pragmatic approach, balancing responsibilities and workload.	Chapters 3 and 4
5. Our ICT is managed by existing organisational policies.	You may not be protected when a problem arises. Specific policies to cover ICT are important.	Chapter 5
6. We have an appropriate set of policies which acknowledge ICT risks and impacts and know they work well.	This framework supports the organisation well and should eliminate many potential issues.	Chapter 5
7. ICT costs lots of money which we feel would be better spent on people.	We all want to do more for our beneficiaries and ICT can enable us to do more for less. Money invested now can save money later.	Chapter 6
8. Well-managed and well-resourced ICT is fundamental to our successful, effective and efficient operation and we provide the resources it needs.	Your ethos and support will be rewarded with lower costs, better services and fewer issues.	Chapter 6

<p>9. We need to know the absolute detail of everything that's going on with ICT.</p>	<p>Do you really need to know everything? Your role is to provide strategic direction, not get involved in operational management.</p>	<p>Chapter 7</p>
<p>10. We provide appropriate resources and support for ICT, ask the right questions, set the overall strategy, apply a guiding hand and leave the hands-on activities to the experts.</p>	<p>You are likely to be striking a good balance with your role and support.</p>	<p>Chapter 7</p>
<p>11. ICT might be useful for staff but we work best with paper.</p>	<p>If it works for you that's fine but there might be opportunities you haven't yet considered which could make your life easier. What do your colleagues think?</p>	<p>Chapter 8</p>
<p>12. We take advantage of the benefits of communication, information sharing and performance management to enable us to work more effectively as a board.</p>	<p>You're practising what you preach and making the best of ICT.</p>	<p>Chapter 8</p>
<p>13. ICT changes too fast for us to keep up with it.</p>	<p>Technology has improved dramatically in the past ten years. There are new opportunities and reliability is much better.</p>	<p>Chapter 9</p>
<p>14. We know we can't always keep up to date but we plan for change and keep an eye on worthwhile developments for the future.</p>	<p>It's very difficult to know everything that's happening but you can keep on top of general trends.</p>	<p>Chapter 9</p>

Let's consider some typical examples of ICT Governance and see how your responses compare to other organisations.

Examples of ICT Governance

The three examples below are common ICT Governance approaches in many VCOs.

Example approach	Implication
<p>a) It just happens. We have no idea how but it all seems fine and doesn't cost much money.</p>	<p>It is likely your organisation is not managing risk or getting value for money. The trustees will not be fulfilling their governance responsibilities.</p>
<p>b) Potentially interfering. We like to have our finger on the pulse of all ICT developments. We know exactly what's happening and are happy to instruct and redirect when we feel necessary.</p>	<p>It is likely you're not making the best of your staff resources and may be frustrating planning and implementation. You may undermine confidence and confuse matters.</p>
<p>c) SSS – Set, Support and See through. We set an overall strategy and direction, provide resources and support to staff leading the project and hold them directly accountable for both success and failure. We agree appropriate risks, are happy to provide a listening ear when staff require it, and reward well-managed activities regardless of end result.</p>	<p>You're on the right track. Staff need to know which direction to go (and why), feel supported, be given the necessary resources and be held accountable. You're acting as a critical friend, managing risk well, probably getting good value for money and are a good governing board.</p>

None of this is rocket science. Depending on your size of organisation you might spend 15 minutes or several hours discussing ICT as a board. It might come up infrequently or impact every project you do. The most important thing is to understand how ICT fits you and your organisation and to make the best of it to help you govern effectively.

You don't need to understand the details of technology to make this happen.

From “Struggling” to “Effective”

These two examples offer contrasting pictures of how a VCO can use ICT. They offer a good perspective between organisations where trustees don’t value ICT or resource it, and organisations well supported by trustees who invest time and resources and forward plan strategy.

“**Struggling with systems**” is a medium-sized organisation working with different client groups and offering a variety of services. It has no ICT strategy or budget and the board is reluctant to spend on technology.

- It has to gather information manually to report to funders, increasing time and expense
- Its database is only accessible to a few staff
- The computer system is not properly maintained and crashes frequently, taking far longer to do things than it should
- Morale is low, staff are frustrated and service delivery suffers
- Overall staff costs are high

“**Thought it through carefully**” has been successful in gaining funding to support outcomes management, ICT infrastructure and information management and database systems.

- Managers can view reports on organisational outcomes and individual teams can view their own reports
- Front line staff can access case notes and records, set reminders and produce individual client progress reports
- Clients can see their progress and be helped to improve further
- Processes are cost-effective and make best use of technology, time and people’s skills and expertise

Users benefit because “Thought it through carefully” is able to record its work with ease, share information as necessary, keep data safe and secure, satisfy reporting requirements and make use of the information gathered to inform the development of its service.

Clients see the benefit and impact of good ICT (saving time, money and resources), even if they never see the ICT!

Learning points

- Investing in systems and infrastructure impacts the whole organisation, eases management overload and facilitates a higher quality service to clients
- As trustees, you can make a difference to what your organisation does with a few simple decisions, some forward planning and support
- Ad hoc, under-funded systems frustrate staff, compromise service delivery and ultimately cost more money



Signposts

Governance Healthcheck – how is your board doing generally? www.govhc.org.uk

What Management Committees and Trustees Need to Know
www.governancehub.org.uk/publications.html

Online learning for trustees www.trusteelearning.org

National Occupation Standards for Management Committee Members
www.governancehub.org.uk/publications.html



Key points

- Governance is the way trustees work with senior managers and staff, volunteers and service users, members and other stakeholders to ensure their organisation is run effectively, meeting the needs for which it was set up.
- Good ICT Governance involves thinking about ICT in every aspect of your role as a trustee. It's about how you can better deliver services, employ staff and recruit trustees. It's about running a more effective and efficient organisation and doing more for your beneficiaries.
- Organisations can get value from well-supported and resourced ICT, and leadership starts with the trustee board.
- Your model of ICT Governance will have a major impact on how effective and efficient your organisation is, the quality of services you provide and how many problems you're likely to face in the future.



Action points

1. What is your approach to ICT Governance? Do you need or want to change?
2. What would you like your organisation to do better regarding ICT Governance? Take your answers from the quick questionnaire and use the chapter references to work on specific areas.
3. Start to consider what you could do differently as an individual trustee regarding your organisation's attitude to ICT. The next chapter will give you more ideas.
4. Start to consider what you could do collectively as a trustee board regarding your organisation's attitude to ICT.



SECTION 2

What can ICT do for you?

ICT making a difference to you, your board and within your organisation

The amount of information we have to manage increases daily. Demands for improved monitoring and evaluation, touch-of-a-button statistical reporting and instant access to detailed case records poses problems if you're still working on paper. The sheer volume of information and the need to search in a hurry often makes computer systems more practical alternatives. Email is a rapid way to share information with many people and to track what you said to whom. As funding gets harder, being able to do things quicker or finding new ways to share information and resources becomes essential.

ICT is all about information management and communication, doing the best for your beneficiaries and being more effective and efficient. Used well, it supports staff in their role and means both you and funders get more for your money.

If you're serious about making the best for your organisation, you need to take the role of ICT seriously. But fear not, we won't turn you into a techie unless you want to become one!

The benefits of well-managed ICT



Checklist

Twelve ways in which ICT can help your organisation work better

1. Better service delivery

Provide 24-hour help and advice via an interactive website and email service, supporting a telephone helpline.

2. Better access to information for managers

Collect, manage and report performance information to help you run your organisation better.

3. Better financial management

Use spreadsheets to manage project budgets and produce reports for trustees, managers and funders.

4. Better client records

Keep client contact information in a database on your network to support shared work inside the organisation.



Checklist *cont'd*

- 5. Better information for your community**
Computers and the internet can help to collect, manage and publish useful information to support telephone, online and face-to-face advice services.
- 6. Better staff development**
Encourage staff and volunteers to use the internet to keep up to date with key issues in your field.
- 7. Better fundraising**
Use the web and email to identify potential funders and research your bids.
- 8. Better external communications**
Tell local stories and raise awareness of local concerns through a community website, podcasts, bulletin boards or photo-sharing.
- 9. Better internal communications**
Share information and work files with colleagues on a server.
- 10. Better administration**
Manage your information in a more methodical way and spend less time finding things, by using a shared file server.
- 11. More efficient staff**
Find information more easily, share resources and communicate with others.
- 12. More motivated staff**
Better connected, under less pressure, better able to manage resources and information, confident in use of systems and able to do more for less effort.

(Adapted from ICT Hub Guide to Managing ICT in the Voluntary and Community Sector)

Managing ICT well is no different to managing organisations or teams. You need to take care of people, money, physical resources and services and set the right environment and tone. If you don't, you won't get the benefits.



Exercise

How is your ICT managed?

- Do you agree strategic plans for ICT?
- Do you ensure people have time to both do and learn new things and have the skills and confidence to do their job effectively and efficiently?
- Finance/budgets – is there enough money for practical purposes and investment in replacement equipment? Are running costs agreed and ring-fenced well in advance?
- Is change (and the motivation for change) supported? Is there flexibility in the organisation to adapt to change?
- Are you using a good governance model?
- Is your ICT equipment fit for purpose and does it support activities and the way people work?
- Do you provide opportunities to innovate and plan?
- Are there adequate resources in place such as people, time and money?
- Do you have a strong policy framework and good risk management?
- Do you provide support (and supervision) for projects as needed?

No matter how well your ICT is managed at the moment, this guide will help and support you, step by step, to improve your ICT Governance.

Your role as a trustee – the nature of ICT Governance and leadership

Trustees are people who are elected or appointed by an organisation to sit on their governing body and make decisions on its behalf. You don't need to be an expert in ICT or understand everything but you must discharge your duty of care effectively. You can delegate, but you can't abdicate.

So when should you be involved and when should you stay out of it? It depends on the size of organisation and the level of ICT management. The decision is often more about impact than purely money.

- Good trustees govern rather than manage. In a very small organisation you may need to do both, especially if it is entirely volunteer run. Perhaps you can get another volunteer to help with specific ICT tasks such as project management.
- Your job is to set strategy, help inform, support and to guide, not to make micro-decisions.
- The ICT strategy must fit the business plan. Good ICT strategies are not full of technical jargon; it should be clear why you're doing something, how much it will cost and what the implications are.
- Be careful about applying ideas which don't fit the culture and size of your organisation. Systems which work for large companies may not help a small community group.

Let's look at some examples:

Activity	Size of organisation	Cost of project	Recommendation for trustee board	Reason for recommendation
Buying one new computer	10 staff	£500	This is an operational activity for a member of staff	Most operational decisions of this nature would be made by someone with budget authority who understands the overall cost implications. However, the smaller the organisation, the more significant the investment
Setting up a new website	40 staff	£25,000	You need to understand the why, what, how and when for this project. Ask questions, review the plan and ask for regular progress updates	It's a significant investment and you need to understand what could go wrong – and whether the money might be better spent elsewhere
ICT strategy	Any number	Varies	You need to be involved even if only as a reviewer of strategy	The ICT strategy will impact almost everything your organisation does

Case Study

When less is more

The dangers of applying big company ICT in small community groups

A small VCO with one full-time manager and a part-time assistant needed a better way to manage data. The organisation was fortunate to have an ICT expert on board, a manager with a leading multinational technology company. The expert suggested a complex management information system based on experiences with his own company. It would cost a large amount of money, take a considerable amount of time to set up and manage and, while it would store the information, it wouldn't be very practical.

Another volunteer intervened and suggested a much simpler system based on experiences with a similar small organisation. The simpler system is working well and supporting the organisation.

Beware that technical experts don't always understand the detailed needs and implications in a small organisation. It's why boards need to make joint decisions.

→ Case Study

Hidden dangers

A go-ahead chief executive wanted to set up a social networking site for a youth project. The cost implications and time needed to set it up would be minimal and the young people would have overall control.

As this was a communications issue, the CEO raised it in an informal meeting with the chair and both decided to raise it directly with the Board.

The trustees discussed it and one of them highlighted the risks (legal and safety) of a website in the charity's name but editorially unsupervised.

After further informal discussions, the CEO decided not to proceed as the potential risks to the organisation and users (lack of control over content, danger of inappropriate contacts for very young users, potential for cyberbullying) outweighed the benefits for the organisation. The collective decision-making and different perspectives helped prevent a potentially awkward problem.

Social networking sites can have fantastic benefits for young people and organisations. This case study illustrates that sometimes it's not appropriate and that trustees (as guardians of the organisation) should have input into projects which impact the wider community.

Don't cut corners – the importance of ICT infrastructure

Good ICT infrastructure is fundamental for all VCOs. Funders are increasingly demanding more outputs for less money as well as additional evidence of your outcomes. All of this is difficult to achieve without good ICT. You'll need effective information management and communication tools and time and labour-saving devices. Withholding expenditure of a few thousand pounds when three of your staff are losing half a day a week because of poor equipment doesn't make the best use of ICT and resources.

“But I hate technology” – why techno-phobes have a role to play

Good! The worst thing for a board is to be wholly over-enthusiastic about technology and gadgets. Boards need the naysayers, the people who ask the difficult questions:

- Why are we doing this?
- What will be the impact?
- How much does it cost?
- What are the risks involved?
- Is there a better way of doing it?

There's a difference between a board that is proactive towards ICT and one that is obsessed by technology and wants to experiment with every development on the market. It helps to have at least one technology-phobic or naysayer on the board – they could save you a lot of money and aggravation and will help you make the right case for projects.

Case Study

Simple solutions, reassuringly sold

HS is a civic society campaigning for a better local community. It is run entirely by volunteers with a range of ICT skills. They work from their own homes and gather in a public meeting place every two months.

They sought volunteer support to develop a website to help campaign and communicate better. An ICT volunteer suggested a blog as a simple tool to keep information up to date and encourage more participation from outside the group. The organisation was initially reluctant because of the need to moderate content and felt concern about the nature of the system.

Further discussions and a demonstration system resolved these worries and HS is now able to update its own blog regularly and encourage community feedback. Responsibilities are shared across the committee with one lead individual taking care of any technical issues.



Key points

- ICT can make a difference in your organisation, positive or negative – the questions are what, how big, and why?
- It's rarely about the technology, more often it's about how you use the tools.
- You need to define the board's level of involvement in ICT and set some clear ground rules. If a project represents at least 5% of your annual turnover, it's a big deal and you need to know about it. If it could impact how you're perceived in the community, you should have a say. If it has the potential to be a disaster (as well as a success), you're entitled to provide input.
- Be sensitive to needs – one size never fits all, and beware the experts in your midst who know too much.
- A good, well-supported ICT infrastructure is fundamental to success.
- ICT is about more than computers on the desk – it's how people use the tools to manage information and communication.



Action points

1. How can ICT help your organisation work better? Take some time out to consider what other similar organisations are doing or what opportunities you would like to take up. What could you take from the checklist on page 20?
2. How well managed is ICT in your organisation? Work through the exercise on page 22 to help find out.
3. With your chair and senior manager, define how involved your board need to be in ICT and set some clear ground rules.
4. If you're a fan of technology, think how you can contribute ideas.
5. If you're technology-phobic or have had bad experiences, think about how you can contribute to the discussion, for example by being the critical friend, challenging ideas, assessing risk and opportunity cost.

Part B

A 'how to' guide

29 3. Making ICT a priority for your organisation

How do you support your organisation's use of ICT?

- 29 Leadership
- 29 Needs analysis
- 30 A simple questionnaire – first steps in needs analysis
- 31 ICT planning and strategy – why it matters
- 32 Doing things better and doing better things
- 33 Why ICT needs resources
- 33 It's not about the technology
- 33 Engaging the interest of your senior manager – how to raise the profile of ICT within your organisation
- 34 Working with fellow trustees to raise the profile of ICT on the board
- 35 Asking the right questions

40 4. Coming to grips with ICT risk

Understanding the potential danger areas associated with ICT

- 40 People not technology
- 40 Disaster recovery and business continuity
- 41 Who's looking at your data? – database management and access
- 41 Security – common-sense technical solutions
- 42 E-communications
- 42 Legislation
- 43 Compliance
- 43 Unacceptable use
- 43 Good risk management
- 44 Who's keeping an eye on things?

45 5. Ensuring the smooth running of your ICT

What policies and procedures do you need to make sure are in place?

- 45 Keeping things running smoothly – the need for policies and procedures
- 45 A handbook for ICT policy
- 45 How to develop and share policies

50 6. Making your money go further

Debunking the myths of ICT costs

- 50 The myths of ICT costs
- 53 Building a business case – spending money wisely for maximum impact
- 53 Sourcing the money – where to find funders

55 7. Leading from the front

Supporting and enabling change in your organisation

- 55 How to make change happen in your organisation
- 57 What staff need from you to make change happen
- 57 Exposure, expertise and confidence

60 8. The future's bright

The positive impact of new technology on your organisation

- 60 The future of ICT in your organisation
- 60 New media – a change in audience, content and dialogue
- 61 Online fundraising
- 62 Multimedia
- 62 Collaborative technologies
- 63 Better communications
- 64 New opportunities, old risks and liabilities
- 64 The need for good old-fashioned management

66 9. Supporting yourselves

Using ICT to strengthen governance practice and performance management

- 66 Sharing information and feedback
- 66 Easier supervisory roles
- 66 Easier performance management
- 67 Performance management through ICT
- 67 Easier consultation
- 68 Informal learning



SECTION 3

Making ICT a priority for your organisation

How do you support your organisation's use of ICT?

What are you responsible for?

You don't have a legal responsibility to ensure ICT is well used in your organisation, but you are responsible for ensuring resources are well used and your operations are efficient and effective. ICT can be a big help with this, so you need to ensure it's well led and well used in your organisation.

Leadership

Leadership is about setting direction, offering support and being accountable for making things happen. You don't need to be an expert and you don't need to understand everything. Leadership is based on trust and accountability. ICT leadership is part of the board's responsibility. How do you want to lead?

Needs analysis

The first key to good ICT leadership is making sure decisions come from needs not wants. It starts with the 'what do we need to do' question. This must be about services and impacts, not about technology.

- I want to... have a shiny new desktop computer
- I need... a PC that performs efficiently and effectively so I can do my job well and not lose time with system crashes
- I want to... have an ICT strategy
- I need... to have the buy-in of senior managers and all staff, to have a practical plan for how we use ICT as an effective tool, to understand our processes and activities as an organisation
- I want to... have a database
- I need... to know what information we need to record, in what format, by whom, and what outputs are required – and to have a system which supports efficient and effective data management

As trustees, you can't be expected to work all these things out – but you should be asking the questions and your senior manager should be providing the answers.

A simple questionnaire – first steps in needs analysis

Fill out the form below for each of your needs identified on the previous page.

Your organisation and people

1. What does your organisation exist to do? [think about this from an activity perspective]

.....

.....

.....

2. Which members of staff would be involved for this activity?

.....

.....

.....

3. Who does your organisation work with to do it? [external partners/clients]

.....

.....

.....

Information

4. What different types of information do you use/manage?

.....

.....

.....

5. What do you need to do with information?

.....

.....

.....

Communication

6. What do you need to communicate, how, and with whom?

Making it easier

7. What would make your job easier?

Addressing concerns

8. What worries and concerns do you have around ICT?

ICT planning and strategy – why it matters

ICT will always cost money, but organisations spend money faster when they don't plan ICT and don't have a clear strategy. This doesn't need to be time consuming, complicated or result in a long plan which no one will read. It's about assessing what you do, deciding how ICT can support you, and then writing a clear plan to make it happen.

Needs analysis helps you work out what you need. Your business plan (or organisational development plan) is absolutely fundamental to making ICT fit what you need to do as an organisation. Bring the needs analysis and business plan together and you're now in a position to produce an ICT strategy – your guide for what to do with ICT.

Invest time and effort in your ICT strategy and any resulting ICT development plan. You don't need to write it yourself and the size and complexity of the document will depend on the size and complexity of your organisation. It's one of the most important documents in your organisation. You may want external help to put it together, from either a consultant or a volunteer. Make sure they have strategic ICT skills as well as technical ones.

The ICT strategy should document your priorities and the reasons behind them, what you plan to invest, how you plan to manage, and it should show a plan for the future.

It's worth remembering that saving a few hundred pounds by not buying a new PC only to have staff members lose hours every week with slow-running computers becomes a false economy very quickly. An ICT strategy will help define cost versus overall value, determine how resources can be made available, and document what the board has agreed.



Signposts

Developing an ICT strategy

www.ict hub.org.uk/articles/Developing_An_ICT_Strategy_xPart_Onex.html

Seven steps to a decision on ICT

www.ict hubknowledgebase.org.uk/7stepstomakeadecision

ICT suppliers (including strategists) directory.ict hub.org.uk/

Sources of ICT volunteers and how to work with them

www.it4communities.org.uk

Using IT to improve your monitoring and evaluation www.performancehub.org.uk

36 Aspects of an ICT strategy www.preponderate.co.uk/resources.htm

Doing things better and doing better things

ICT has only two goals: doing things better and doing better things. If you can't use it for those, don't use it. ICT can have an impact on services both internally (easier to do what you do) and externally (supporting more clients, providing better access to information).

When you decide what you want to do with ICT you must be able to answer:

- Will this help us achieve our goals? How? If not, why are we doing it?
- Does it save us time or money if we do this? How? If not, why are we doing it?
- Does it help us do new and more valuable things? How? If not, why are we doing it?

Case Study

Holding accountable

A medium-sized family services organisation had poorly performing ICT. Information was difficult to access and PCs were old and slow. The board allocated a significant sum of money to upgrade equipment and set up a new shared database.

The board agreed one trustee would work with the chief executive and ICT manager to oversee the project and report back. The board member set clear terms of reference, scope for activities and budget variations (within a fixed overall cost), and passed over detailed responsibility to the staff team.

The ICT manager was empowered to make decisions and take actions within clearly-set boundaries and delivered on time and budget. The trustee was always on hand for support and advice and reported back to the board regularly.

The project was successful because of the clear accountability, terms of reference and flexibility, leadership and support. All parties were happy with the outcome.

Why ICT needs resources

There are a number of factors that need to be considered when investing in ICT. Computers need to be paid for (whether bought or leased), maintained and operated effectively. Networks need to be managed and supported. Websites and databases need to be developed and maintained. This all costs time and money. (There's more about money in Section 6.)

Just as you need to ensure there is enough resource (time and money) to deliver services and provide good supporting management and office accommodation, so you need to ensure there is enough resource to keep the ICT running smoothly. Don't fall into the trap of spending all the funds on equipment with nothing for upkeep and maintenance.

As trustees, you have to pay to have your accounts audited every year – it's a legal requirement. You can think about ICT in the same way – you have to give resources to it. Is audit time a good time to regularly review your ICT?

It's not about the technology

Your ICT projects are never just ICT projects. They're systems, processes and projects within your organisation that use ICT as a supporting tool. The main reason ICT projects fail (overrun, overspend or don't deliver what they promised) is because no one ever really knew what they needed to do. You need to ask (and someone needs to be clear about) what the benefit will be. You need to know what the activity, process and need is before you start developing or planning anything.

There's more about asking the right questions later in this section.

So you've got leadership, you've analysed needs, developed a plan, and understand it's not about the technology. How do you raise the profile and get other people interested?

Engaging the interest of your senior manager – how to raise the profile of ICT within your organisation

We recognise many senior managers may have limited experience or interest in ICT. It may have promised much and delivered little or they may have had a bad experience on a previous project. So let's forget ICT for the moment.

- What does your organisation need if it is to do things better or do better things – how could you deliver better services?
- What will the benefits be?
- Where does it fit within your organisation and role?

Remember: you're not thinking about ICT, you're thinking about what you need to do differently. It could be reporting, information management, communication or something else.

- What's the impact of changing this/doing this?
- What's the benefit?
- What's the cost of not doing it?
- How big a priority is this?

Don't gloss over these questions. They could be fundamental to the future of your organisation.



Signposts

It can be helpful to see examples of what works well in other organisations. There are some good case studies available at www.ictHub.org.uk/caseStudies/

You don't need to love ICT to get the best out of it. You simply need to acknowledge where it can make a difference and exploit that difference. Check out Section 7 on Supporting Change for more help on making that difference.

Working with fellow trustees to raise the profile of ICT on the board

Why do you do any project? Almost always because it's in the interests of your beneficiaries. So how is ICT in the interests of YOUR beneficiaries? After all:

- **Isn't ICT expensive?** Not compared to not having effective ICT. Think of how much time (and therefore money) is wasted in organisations that do not have effective ICT. Would you consider operating with ineffective systems and equipment? Good ICT can generate a significant return on investment for the organisation and generate more support. See Section 6 for more about return on investment.
- **Won't this take money away from front line services?** Quite the opposite. Front line staff are often engaged in time-consuming, inefficient administration or communication that is hampered by inadequate systems, especially in relation to client records and monitoring. Freeing up this time allows more effective work with clients and more effective records, for the agency and its funders.
- **Isn't paper good enough?** Not if you want to search quickly for data, draw up reports at the touch of a button or publish detailed information that is available 24 hours a day.

There are a number of ways to get your fellow trustees more interested.

1. Listen and respond to their concerns about ICT (and their hopes and plans for the organisation).
2. Add ICT to your meeting agendas as a standard item – raise awareness of its potential, not just the problems it causes and the money it costs.
3. Work with others to identify how ICT can help you deliver better services, help more people, improve morale etc. Showcase this to the board.
4. Provide interesting case studies of how innovative ICT makes a big difference (e.g. using text messaging to deliver sexual health services for young people)
5. Identify how you could save them time and money or make them feel more involved. Maybe a new web project will keep them more up to date with hands-on services.
6. Advocate ICT with enthusiasm. You are all passionate about your beneficiaries; some people are equally passionate about ICT for the right reasons (not purely technical ones). Get such enthusiasts to talk to your fellow trustees.



Signposts

Once your fellow trustees are on board, you might want to look at training and awareness raising opportunities. You don't need to know how to repair a broken PC but it helps to know what ICT can do. Opportunities for training in strategic ICT are becoming more common.

Cass Business School (Centre for Charity Effectiveness)
www.centreforcharityeffectiveness.org

ICT Hub events www.ictHub.org.uk/events
net:gain courses ruralnet.typepad.com/netgain/

Everyone's on board (or getting there). You've prioritised your resources, engaged people and developed a strategy. How do you assess projects?

Asking the right questions

Your senior manager presents you with an idea or a project. How do you know if it's any good? How do you find out the implications? How can you come to a rational decision as a board?

The following checklists can help you be sure you've got a really good reason for your project and have thought it through. Remember, you're not micro-managing but ensuring a meaningful and safe project for the organisation.



Checklist

Questions to ask of fellow board members in meetings about any potential ICT project

1. How does this fit into our overall mission?

.....
.....
.....

2. How does this support the business plan?

.....
.....
.....



Checklist *cont'd*

3. Is it part of our ICT strategy?

4. Does this help us achieve our goals? How? If not, why are we doing it?

5. Does it save us time or money if we do this? How? If not, why are we doing it?

6. Does it help us do new and more valuable things? How? If not, why are we doing it?

7. What will it cost?

8. What's the 'opportunity cost' of doing this – what might we do if we didn't spend money on it?



Checklist

Questions for your senior manager to ask staff or volunteers about any potential ICT project

1. Will this help us achieve our goals? How? If not, why are we doing it?

2. Will it save us time or money if we do this? How? If not, why are we doing it?

3. Will it help us do new and more valuable things? How? If not, why are we doing it?

4. What will it cost?

5. Who will do it? Can we manage it in-house or do we need external help and support?
Where will we find external supporters and how will we vet them?



Checklist *cont'd*

6. What are the risks?

7. What are the implications if things go wrong?

8. What difference will it make if we're successful?

You can't always answer every question, and sometimes you need to take a chance. It's up to you how big a risk you take.



Key points

- You need to lead ICT from the top. Show you're committed to resourcing, supporting and showing interest in projects and opportunities.
- Be clear about the role of ICT planning and strategy.
- Needs analysis is about services and impacts, not wanting a new gadget – don't get technology for technology's sake.
- Make sure you resource ICT appropriately – don't do things you can't afford to sustain or spend all the money up front.
- Engage your senior manager and fellow trustees – you don't have to love technology but you do need to respect what it can do for you.
- Ask the right questions.



Action points

1. Schedule some time at a board meeting in the near future to consider the role of ICT in your organisation. Think about what you could do better using technology.
2. Complete your Needs Analysis on page 30 – start with the 'what do we need to do' question. This must be about services and impacts, not about technology.
3. Work out the first step you need to take to make a difference and make it happen.
4. Develop an ICT strategy – you might ask your senior manager to do this on your behalf.
5. Decide when you're going to carry out your annual ICT review – the same time as your accounts audit?
6. Think about the questions you might ask of future projects and how ICT might fit these.

SECTION 4



Coming to grips with ICT risk

Understanding the potential danger areas associated with ICT

What are you responsible for?

You're responsible for ensuring risk is adequately managed. As a trustee you have a legal liability for activities undertaken in the organisation's name. You need to be aware of the implications of ICT risk and how they can be managed.

The role of trustees in managing ICT risk is no different to managing any other type of risk. You can put measures in place to prevent problems happening and have procedures in place to deal with them when they do. Adding ICT to your risk management policy and having a disaster recovery plan is fundamental to a well-governed organisation.

People not technology

There are three types of ICT risk:

1. The technology (problems or failures)
2. Your people do something they shouldn't (deliberately or otherwise)
3. Someone outside your organisation does something they shouldn't

You don't need to micro-manage this. It's everyone's responsibility to be clear about risks and risk management – but you do need to be confident that systems are in place and are operating appropriately. It's more often people causing the problem than technology.

Disaster recovery and business continuity

What would happen if your ICT equipment broke down or got stolen? How would your staff carry on doing their job? Disaster recovery isn't complicated and isn't unique to ICT. What would happen if your office became unavailable? What would happen if your paper files got stolen? How do you keep providing a service?

One of your most important roles is ensuring your organisation can carry on if the worst happens. That's as much about access to data and computer equipment as about having a desk to work from.



Signposts

Could Your ICT cope if your office burned down
www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/disasterpreparation

Keeping your computers and data secure
www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/keepcomputerssafeandsound

Who's looking at your data? – database management and access

We're conditioned to lock our confidential paper files in metal cabinets, but what are you doing about your sensitive electronic data? Who can access your email? How easy is it to get at your data? Is your database unprotected and easy to access?

Make sure only authorised individuals can access data, whoever's hands the computer ends up in.

Case Study

The perils of losing sensitive data

A children's counselling service suffered a break-in. Half a dozen PCs were stolen, along with the master database containing information about vulnerable local children.

The PCs were sold on by the thieves. The organisation was insured and managed to get hold of new equipment quickly. However they didn't have a back-up copy of the data and had to set up the database from scratch.

Three weeks later, they found out someone had been contacting their children and revealing detailed personal information only the charity (or their parents) could know. A local sex offender had bought one of the stolen PCs and found hundreds of detailed records of young people, complete with contact details and counselling histories – all because the data wasn't secured.

You can't eliminate all break-ins but you can make data secure. Make sure all databases are protected with passwords and encryption if possible and regularly backed up. It's simple enough but makes a huge difference to the safety and security of your data.

Security – common-sense and technical solutions

A laptop is a valuable asset both for its own sake and for the data it contains. The smaller laptops get and the more used people are to having them, the easier they are to treat carelessly. Laptops get left in cars (and are prone to theft from the back seat), on the table of a train carriage during a long journey (who's looking at your data over your shoulder?) or in conference rooms over lunch. How do you manage risk regarding your most valuable possessions?

Don't get bogged down in detail here, but make sure someone has covered ICT security. You wouldn't expect your office staff to leave windows open, doors unlocked or confidential files unguarded in a public area. Make sure you are confident your systems are fully protected. You'll need someone to check you have the right tools (e.g. anti-virus, spyware, firewalls) and that they are working. Too many organisations have installed them but never update them, making them almost useless.

Inquisitive children and open-access computers

A busy chief executive regularly takes work home. The home computer is used by the whole family but prioritised for work certain nights of the week. Rather than carry a laptop, he saves his files on the home computer and emails them between home and work.

The family's 11-year-old son was experimenting with the system, trying out new skills learned at school. He found a set of documents and a database, and started to test out his new Access skills. He decided to email it to a friend to show what he'd done. The file contained confidential details of a friend's mother's confidential personnel records. The chief executive hadn't safeguarded his data with a separate login or folder; anyone could switch on the computer and find it and change it at will.

The boy started downloading 'free' music and movies from the internet. Within weeks, the PC became infected with a virus but the family hadn't set up virus scanning so didn't really notice, apart from the computer being slower than usual.

The following morning the chief executive emailed his files back to work and spread a virus around the office.

Risk doesn't start and end at the office, and you need to make sure people manage risk well, wherever they hold your information.

E-communications

Email is a fantastic communication tool but potentially risky at the same time. What's being said in your name? Are staff clear how to differentiate personal from professional emails? What is being sent to whom and about what? It's not your job to know everything but it is your job to ensure there's a framework in place and that it's working.



14 email dos and don'ts www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk/emailtips

Legislation

Legislation gets more complicated every year. Like all aspects of running a VCO, trustees are responsible for their organisation meeting the criteria. Do you know what you're responsible for, and is someone on the staff team managing the implications? Data protection is another common problem area which you will need to address, with legal requirements you will need to meet.



Legal issues www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk/legalissues

Compliance

There are things you can do and things you have to do. One of the biggest compliance issues in VCOs is software licensing. You need to have an up-to-date licence for every piece of software you use.



Licensing www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/softwarelicensing

Unacceptable use

Acceptable and unacceptable use are covered more in the next section. What risks are you running with people using your ICT? Are they upsetting other staff? Are they breaking the law? Have you made preparations to deal with the unacceptable use issues in advance?



Acceptable use www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/acceptableusepolicy

Good risk management

How you choose to manage risk depends on the size of your organisation. The bigger your organisation, the more complex the management and policies are likely to be.

Have you considered the following areas?

	Risk assessed	Policy in place	Policy overseen
Disaster recovery and business continuity			
Database management and access			
Security			
Compliance			
Licensing			
ICT use and misuse			
Policy frameworks			
Confidentiality and privacy			

We'll cover policies in more detail in the next chapter.

Who's keeping an eye on things?

It's not enough to know about risks and have a plan; you need to have the right internal controls and ensure risk is effectively managed by your senior manager. Someone has to do the monitoring – who will it be?



Business Link IT Risk Assessment Tool
www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/ITRiskAssessment



Key points

- Risk management is part of your role as a trustee. ICT presents its own risks.
- People create more risks than technology does. Make sure your staff are aware of the implications of what they do, whether it's working on home computers or leaving laptops on trains or on the back seat of a car.
- Investing time upfront to minimise risks can save time, money and reputations in the longer term.



Action points

1. Check that your organisation has a security policy and that it's being managed.
2. Discuss and document the potential risks in your organisation and ensure they are regularly reviewed. Use the guidance in the next chapter to help you develop and manage your policies to support this.
3. Appoint someone on the trustee board to supervise risk management. It should be a shared responsibility but it's good to have a single person covering this and reporting back to the board.



SECTION 5

Ensuring the smooth running of your ICT

What policies and procedures do you need to make sure are in place?

What are you responsible for?

You shouldn't need to write policies but you do need to be confident they're working. You need to account for all the issues as part of good governance.

If you're a very small organisation and run by volunteers, you can probably cover all these aspects in a few pieces of paper. There are template policies available, but make sure they fit your needs before you adopt them.

Remember that policy management is for managers. You simply need to make sure the policies are in place, fit for purpose and being managed.

Keeping things running smoothly – the need for policies and procedures

When you work alone, you can set your own rules. When you're the boss in a small group, you can usually see enough to 'manage hands on'. As trustees are more distant from day-to-day operations, they need to be confident everyone understands their role and responsibilities. Ask yourself questions about potential pitfalls.

You can find a checklist of ICT policies in the box overleaf.

A handbook for ICT policy

You have employee handbooks, probably diversity policies, often child protection policies too. You should also have ICT policies. As trustees, you should check such policies are in place and that you're confident they work. You need to be sure that all these issues are covered in induction sessions for new staff or volunteers and that all 'ethical' areas are managed. People often behave at work as they do at home and that can be inappropriate sometimes.



ICT and Ethics www.icthub.org.uk/articles/Ethics_and_ICT.html

How to develop and share policies

Talk to other organisations and find out what they use. Feel free to borrow and adapt. The resources section at the end of the chapter highlights some good templates you can use or amend.

Beware: don't simply take someone else's policy off the shelf. You need to tailor and adapt it for your organisation and make sure it's understood and used correctly.



Checklist

ICT policies

- Acceptable Use policy**
It is essential to draw clear and appropriate boundaries about what people can and can't do with their ICT at work
- Accessibility and inclusivity**
You need to ensure your staff have the tools they need and know how to use them – and that you are complying with the Disability Discrimination Act
- Back up**
Be clear how and how often you back up your data, which programmes you use, and where your back-ups are kept
- Breach of libel laws**
Know what you can and can't say and who says what in your name (especially in relation to discussion forums and emails)
- Charities Law and Companies Act**
Publishing basic charity and company data on emails and websites
- Confidentiality**
Implement password procedures and ensure your data is stored securely
- Data protection**
Know who has access to data and what you can do with it
- Disaster recovery**
Processes and plans to cover loss of equipment and data
- Duty of care**
Responsibilities around libel/slander, child protection (young people's forums, personal data etc)
- Health and Safety policy**
How people use computers, what support they need and the impact on health and safety
- Intellectual property**
Identify who owns the material on your website, information sent by email and other digital content, and determine what other people can do with it
- Internet and email use policy**
What people should and shouldn't do on the internet and in emails
- Procurement policy**
Who can buy what, when and how
- Website disclaimers**
This should cover privacy and terms of use, especially if you have discussion forums or publish other user-contributed content



Signposts

Sources of sample policies and templates

ICT Hub Knowledgebase

www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/makingpoliciesbestpractice

Guide to Managing ICT in the Voluntary and Community Sector (Section 4 – Policies and Procedures) www.ictHub.org.uk/managing_ICT/policies_and_procedures.html



Checklist

Additional key documents

Managing ICT is easier if you have the relevant information at hand. The following documents will support policies and procedures and help you oversee their implementation.

- ICT strategy** – your key ICT document which helps support decision-making and planning.
- Contact numbers for technical support/suppliers** – to enable you to get help quickly and easily.
- Issue logs** – records of problems users experience with ICT, updated regularly by an individual with responsibility for ICT. Helps support planning and decision making.
- Password register** – usernames/passwords (encrypted of course) stored securely in a safe place to enable managers to give access when people forget passwords. Will include all logins plus access to websites and passwords for internet connections.
- Asset registers** – basic register documentation of all the ICT your organisation owns including hardware, software, internet connections, websites, databases, printers and consumables such as printer and toner cartridges.
- Hardware guarantees and receipts** – essential if you need to return equipment, and may well be required by auditors.
- Licensing documentation for software** – essential to support compliance monitoring.
- Service level agreements** – contracts with suppliers (e.g. companies who provide your website or technical support) which outline mutual responsibilities and obligations.
- Employee handbook or policies** – to provide background information and framework for ICT specific policies.

Ethics and policy – a conundrum

A small but rapidly expanding charity employed three new members of staff in quick succession. Inductions were limited because of lack of time and the new staff were often out of the office, while working on projects, and took a while to integrate into organisational culture.

A few weeks after the new recruits started, admin staff noticed the internet connection slowing down. There was no obvious reason for this and the slow speeds weren't consistent. The following month the broadband bill arrived and was much higher than usual. The new staff had been downloading internet radio and video (albeit in their breaks), slowing down the system and adding to the bill.

One of the new recruits sat in a corner with his monitor angled away from the main part of the office. He was rather withdrawn but became slightly agitated whenever anyone approached his desk. On his day off, another member of staff used his computer and was distressed by a number of pop-up images which appeared whenever she used the internet. On further investigation the IT manager found inappropriate images on the computer.

All three members of staff were called for a disciplinary meeting with the chief executive. Whatever the impact on the organisation, they hadn't actually done anything wrong – there was no Acceptable Use policy to prohibit the use of internet radio or downloading pictures. However inappropriate the actions, the individuals didn't think they were doing anything wrong and hadn't been advised otherwise.

Don't assume everyone thinks the way you do. Set the tone and be explicit about expectations. People do tend to treat work computers the same way as they treat home computers.



Key points

- Policies help explain what needs to be done and why – they should cover most, if not all, eventualities.
- Policies help set the framework for how your staff manage ICT and illustrate that you've thought through issues. They help keep things running smoothly.
- You can develop policies from other people's templates fairly quickly and easily.
- An effective policy needs to be understood and accepted by everyone it applies to.
- Make sure you review the policies, and check you've covered all areas of risk and operation.



Action points

1. Create a checklist of all the policies that apply to your organisation.
2. Identify which ICT policies are already in place (and working well) and which need to be developed.
3. Set a timetable for your team to develop and implement the missing policies.
4. Review the complete set of policies (you might appoint a single trustee to do this).
5. Conduct an annual review of policies alongside general risk management and scrutiny and amend as necessary.

SECTION 6



Making your money go further

Debunking the myths of ICT costs

What are you responsible for?

As a trustee board, you're responsible for agreeing or setting budgets and overseeing the appropriate use of funds. You should set appropriate internal controls and delegate responsibilities effectively.

The myths of ICT costs

ICT undoubtedly costs money. However, the impact of poorly-managed and under-funded ICT could end up costing you more.

“Understandably, some funders want to focus on supporting direct services for clients. However, the effectiveness of service delivery can be seriously undermined by inadequate ICT. Supporting ICT can provide the essential structure on which effective service provision is based.” Director, medium-sized grant-making foundation

We've already described some of the opportunities ICT provides, such as:

- saving admin time with a database,
- providing 24-hour access to information via a website,
- supporting staff to achieve 10% more with faster computers and better communication tools,
- increasing staff motivation with tools and training that make their jobs more enjoyable and meaningful.

What is all this worth? There has to be a return on investment for all the money you spend, whether on ICT or something else. Let's look at two common examples: replacing old computers and developing an advice website.

Case Study

New computers

A women's organisation had struggled for funding for many years and was relying on old and ineffective computers. Staff struggled to complete basic tasks such as report writing, printing and using databases. Computers regularly crashed, losing work, or ran so slowly they caused frustration. Staff morale was very low and they estimated they lost a day a week in productivity, through ICT problems.

One of the organisation's funders visited their site and saw their computer problems at first hand. He suggested they submit a funding application and bring in a strategic ICT expert to cost and plan a simple replacement system.

The funding application was successful and the ICT expert worked with all staff to

identify needs, produce a strategy and budget with the senior manager and help select a company to supply and install new equipment.

Every member of staff got a new PC (with basic training in how to use it), the overall ICT infrastructure was upgraded and new printers and internet connections installed in the offices. The organisation also bought a support contract to have ICT help available on call if anything went wrong.

Six months later, the new ICT was working well, staff morale was excellent and productivity had dramatically increased. Staff felt ICT now supported them rather than compromised everything they did. The senior manager and trustees felt as if they had gained an extra two members of staff.

Something as simple as new computers, well looked after and with support on call, can have a huge impact on how staff feel and what they can achieve for clients. In this case, an investment of £20,000 has improved the productivity of a ten-member staff team by more than 20%. The initial costs will be repaid inside a year.

→ Case Study

Information-sharing website

An advice agency had been running a helpline for many years but was struggling to meet users' needs and to support the costs of running the service throughout the week.

Management and trustees agreed that much of the information was now available online but their users couldn't always find it. Some of the questions the helpline was asked were very specific but came up several times a day.

The organisation surveyed helpline users about their ICT skills and access to the internet. Responses were overwhelmingly positive – most had online access and were comfortable using websites. However, users said they found some more general websites unhelpful and needed additional advice.

The organisation invited users to get involved in the commissioning and development of an advice website, ensuring needs were met and the website was designed to provide the best possible service. Trustees worked with management to raise funds and to ensure a member of staff was given specific time each week to update the site with new information and answers to specific questions. Users were involved in testing and in management decisions and were also responsible for signing off the system with the trustees.

Several months later, the website was launched at the AGM alongside a marketing and awareness campaign. Users now have access to information 24 hours a day and can ask specific questions which receive responses on the site within one working day. There are now very few telephone enquiries and increasing numbers of people are accessing information online. The helpline operators spend a day a week contributing to the website and answering emails and devote the rest of their time to much-needed policy work. Helpline costs have decreased dramatically and users are receiving a better service.

In both case studies, spending money on ICT saved considerable sums in the first year.

What could you do with the money you are spending on ICT? Is it possible to generate the same return on investment or better?

It's always tempting to spend money recruiting more staff, but technology often makes your existing staff more productive, happier and better motivated to do more with existing resources.



Checklist

What does effective ICT look like?

We're not talking bells and whistles; we're talking basic infrastructure, supporting needs, enabling people.

- A good, well-thought-out ICT plan (what you're going to do, how, when and why)
- Management support and effective ICT policies and systems in place
- A computer (and software) for every member of staff who needs one
- Sufficient training for staff to do their job and perform their key tasks
- Managed ICT security – anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewalls
- Back-up and disaster recovery plan
- A support contract so when things go wrong your organisation can call for help
- A computer network for all organisations with more than five staff, to enable information sharing
- Printers, scanners and back-up devices
- A database to store, share and access information
- Communications that support the organisation and mission
- Access to email and the internet, preferably via broadband
- A website to publicise and share information
- Time for staff to share ideas, maintain websites and databases
- Consumables (new printer cartridges/toners, disks etc) available as needed

All these elements contribute to better services, greater return on investment and maximum efficiency.

Every time you develop a project, think about how you can factor the above costs into the grant proposal to account for full cost recovery and what we call 'total cost of ownership'. If you don't, the organisation/project may not be sustainable and the quality of its service delivery will fall.

Building a business case – spending money wisely for maximum impact

- Developing ICT outcomes is about building a strong case statement to justify an ICT initiative. (You'll have identified this from the questions you asked earlier.)
- Different people may support the ICT initiative for different reasons – keep all the good reasons at hand and be aware of personal motivations.
- Without a sufficiently strong case at the start, the ICT initiative will be more prone to fail.
- A lack of rationale often leads to confusion and a lack of focus as the project takes shape and is implemented.
- Your decisions about the use of ICT need to be based on the full range of benefits, as well as costs, in order to prioritise effectively.
- The best way to know if an ICT initiative is worth pursuing is to see if you or others in the organisation can articulate what the organisation will gain if it is successfully implemented.

If there is one characteristic that sets effective VCOs apart from others, it is that they take the time to ensure the resources they spend on ICT make the most impact.

Sourcing the money – where to find funders

Trustees have a role in supporting staff, especially in very small organisations. Very few funders exclusively fund ICT but if you've set your ICT strategy right, your projects won't be exclusively ICT – they'll be about making a difference.



Signposts

Sources of funders www.ictHub.org.uk/research/

Funding for ICT www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/fundingict

How to cost and fund ICT

www.ictHub.org.uk/articles/How_to_Cost_and_Fund_ICT.html

Calculating technology budget

www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/calculatingtechnologybudget

Discounted deals www.ictHub.org.uk/discounted_deals

Full cost recovery www.fullcostrecovery.org.uk/



Key points

- Not funding and prioritising ICT will cost you more in the longer term.
- ICT can generate significant return on investment for limited spending.
- There are a wide range of ICT costs which you'll need to factor in to your budget.
- There are more opportunities to spend money than you have resources (time or money) available.
- ICT funding can be scarce, so ensure your project is about more than technology.



Action points

1. Identify what projects would make most impact and generate the most significant return on investment.
2. Develop (with your senior management team) a practical ICT budget for your organisation and plan for the long term.
3. Do some research to support your fundraising team and identify which funders might help with particular projects.
4. Identify your priorities and stick to them.
5. Build your business case and use it to monitor project progress and success.



SECTION 7

Leading from the front

Supporting and enabling change in your organisation

What are you responsible for?

Let's be honest, change can be hard work. If anyone is going to be able to lead and make a difference it's the trustee board working with senior management. Set the right tone, support the right culture and enable staff on the front line to do their jobs.

Change management is the process of making things happen, a systematic approach to dealing with change, both from the perspective of an organisation and on the individual level.

How to make change happen in your organisation

There are eight major steps to successful change. You need to follow all eight to make it happen and each involves key responsibilities for you as trustees.

1. Establishing a sense of urgency

Complacency is the biggest enemy. In the absence of a crisis and when some individuals are happy with the status quo and don't see need for improvement, the view may be: 'we might do this soon'. That can mean your organisation misses opportunities and is wrong-footed when crisis does strike.

Responsibility: Don't let staff and clients nod something through – ask the right questions and establish how quickly you want to progress.

2. Leading from the front

Change requires leadership, expertise and credibility. Don't assume your colleagues have the same views as you when it comes to supporting change.

Responsibility: Make sure there is momentum behind a project.

3. Developing a vision and a strategy

What are you doing, why are you doing it and how are you doing it? Vision is often confused. It's easy to tell someone something but difficult to be sure they've understood what you think they've understood.

Responsibility: Make sure you have a clear reason for what you're doing.

4. Communicating your vision

Vision shouldn't require a two-hour presentation. It should be clear, snappy and capable of being understood by everyone. Keep it simple, use analogy ("our new website will mean clients with internet access can get hold of our advice 24 hours a day – it's like being open all night but we still get to sleep!"), use repetition, keep talking (and listening) to your team, and lead by example.

Responsibility: Make sure people clearly understand why you're doing something, know its priority and importance and have taken it on board as their own.

5. Empowering your organisation to take action

What's going to stop this happening? Attitudes are one inhibitor, but organisational structure is often a bigger problem. It's about communicating a sensible vision, making organisational structures and processes compatible with that vision, providing the training needed, making sure the personnel and information systems fit the proposed change, and confronting people who undermine that change.

Responsibility: Work with staff to identify what needs to happen to prevent things getting in the way of the change and to make it happen.

6. Generating short-term wins

Short-term wins help build evidence for overall change, provide rewards and incentives to keep going, keep the more awkward people on board, help fine tune the project and build overall momentum.

Responsibility: What early successes can you aim for and celebrate? Make sure you can demonstrate the progress the project has made well before the end.

7. Consolidating gains and producing more change

Don't rest on your laurels. Build on change and help the organisation innovate more. Consolidation requires support from bottom-up as well as top-down. Sell the advantages, get those 'nay sayers' involved and keep supporting the changes in attitude and structure.

Responsibility: Keep everyone on board, build on successful changes and keep communicating the benefits.

8. Anchoring new approaches in the culture

Make sure all the hard work doesn't fail. Anchoring change depends on results (the change needs to have been successful), requires lots of communication and may involve moving or losing staff.

Responsibility: Be prepared to support senior management with direct action. Provide the resources to keep things on track and see through the change to the end. You may need to take some hard decisions.



Signposts

ICT Hub article on change management

www.ict hub.org.uk/articles/Making_Change_Happen.html

Project management (an introduction)

www.ict hubknowledgebase.org.uk/whatisprojectmanagement

I don't need this

EAG is a volunteer-run community group in London. The chair of trustees got very excited by the idea of an ICT volunteer developing a database. After a few detailed conversations, plans were well advanced and the system was ready to share with others.

The administrator was invited to meet the ICT volunteer for the first time. Her first reaction was that she didn't like using technology and didn't see the need for a database. Further discussion identified that the role of administrator could be done by almost anyone if the information was centralised on a database. There was a danger the current administrator would no longer be needed.

From an organisational perspective, the new system would reduce risks of data being restricted to one person. From a personal perspective, no one person was fundamental to the organisation any more.

The administrator didn't want to give up 'her' data and refused to share it. The new system couldn't go ahead without her co-operation and EAG had to carry on as before.

Learning points

- Be clear about your vision before you start a project and communicate it to everyone – explain why and the impact it will have
- Underline the importance and impact of decisions – the new system was in the best interests of the organisation and members but not the administrator
- Don't let individuals get in the way of progress – sometimes you'll need to make a hard choice

What staff need from you to make change happen

We've acknowledged that change is hard, and have shown the steps to take to make it easier. But what qualities do staff need from trustees?

- Someone to take an overview.
- Support (not day-to-day but to provide commitment and interest in the outcome).
- Confidence and leadership.
- Direction.
- Resources (not only budgets but someone to make decisions for the long term).
- A firm hand to make sure things don't go back to the way they were.

It's important to stay away from the detail; it gives you a much better perspective and enables you to make clear decisions. Remember this isn't a popularity contest.

Exposure, expertise and confidence

Not everyone gets excited by ICT, but exposure to ICT successes does help. Try and get the quick wins. Be calm and confident, demonstrate what works and be honest about what doesn't. If mistakes happen, understand what they are and how you're going to learn from them.

Show fellow trustees what works; go and see databases in action, ask staff to explain why the new PC makes their work more efficient and the job more enjoyable, watch people using the website, and talk to service users who have benefited from good ICT decisions.



Key points

- Change is about a systematic process and understanding the different perspectives of organisations and individuals. You can't force something to happen.
- Be wary of making too much change in an organisation at the same time – you can't revamp everything at once.
- Be clear about what the organisation needs from you – we've highlighted key responsibilities above but it's a good idea to ask. It will vary among different people and groups.
- Make sure projects generate short-term wins – people get tired of hearing "it will be great when it's finished".
- Support the development of a vision and strategy, and make sure there's the right amount of urgency.
- Ensure the organisation can support the change, and work out what you need to do to ensure things don't go back to how they were.



Action points

1. What do you need to change (if anything) in your organisation?

2. What tools do you need to make change happen in your organisation?

3. What 'change' projects have gone wrong in your organisation and why?

4. What 'change' projects have gone well in your organisation and why?

5. How do you see your individual role (and the board's role) in supporting change?



SECTION 8

The future's bright

The positive impact of new technology on your organisation

What are you responsible for?

It's important to understand the potential of ICT – what might it do for your beneficiaries in the future? How good is your current system and could it be improved? You'll need good advice, either from within the board or elsewhere.

The future of ICT in your organisation

ICT will continue to change, and some of those changes will impact your organisation. They might enable you to reach more people, raise more funds, manage information more easily, communicate better or simply be more efficient. Current developments in technology offer a lot of opportunities.

New media – a change in audience, content and dialogue

'New media' (also commonly described as Web 2.0) is a description applied to more recent developments in ICT such as blogging, podcasting and sharing audio, videos and images – it's really only a different way to tell stories and share ideas and experiences.

New media offer fresh opportunities for interactive communication with different communities, support better sharing of information, easy publishing, and are a great asset in campaigning. However, it also brings responsibilities and requires planning to make the best of them. Your audience may contribute as much of the content of communications as you do. At some stage your organisation may need to take a risk, but make sure it's a managed risk.



Signposts

What is new media www.ictHub.org.uk/how_we_can_help/New_Media.html

Web 2.0 for the voluntary sector
www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/web2forvoluntarysector

New Media Case Studies
www.ictHub.org.uk/publications/New_media_case_studies.pdf

Blogging www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/goingtotheblogs



Keywords

- **BLOG** is short for web log. A blog is an online journal that is updated frequently and is easy to maintain and read. Blogs often provide commentary or news on a particular subject.
- **PODCASTING** involves making an audio file (usually in MP3 format) of content that is updated frequently (i.e. a weekly or monthly radio programme) available for automatic download so users can listen to the file at their convenience.

Online fundraising

It's every charity's dream to raise millions on the internet. Online fundraising describes using the internet to raise funds, encouraging donations with websites and email, and collecting funds via a secure webpage.

Some online appeals work well but many produce only small amounts of income. Fundraising is still about relationships as well as money, and new tools can help with both. Social networking sites such as Bebo help raise awareness with children while Facebook supports groups and organisational networking. The smallest of charities can raise funds with the tools provided by sites such as Justgiving.



Signposts

Online fundraising the easy way

www.icthub.org.uk/articles/Online_Fundraising_the_easy_way.html

Creating a fundraising page the easy way www.justgiving.com

Social networking and raising funds

www.icthub.org.uk/articles/Social_Networking_and_Raising_Funds.html

Charitable Giving in the Digital Age (ICT Foresight)

www.icthub.org.uk/publications/ICTForesight-CharitableGiving.pdf



Keywords

- **JUSTGIVING** website providing simple-to-use online fundraising tools, enabling supporters to give online.
- **SOCIAL NETWORKING** Social networking is linking people with particular interests to each other in some way, usually by means of an interactive website. Facebook, Bebo and MySpace are popular examples. Social networks support the rapid spread of information and ideas through people who are connected and who usually trust each other's recommendations.

Multimedia

ICT, especially with the increasing use of high-speed internet connections, offers the opportunity to share audio and video to help get your organisation and cause noticed. It's a far cry from paper newsletters but could be a useful tool. If you choose to use multimedia, do it well and ensure you're not using it for the sake of it. You will need to be careful to ensure your new resources can be accessed by everyone – some of your beneficiaries may still be using older, slower computers and slow internet connections and may need the option of opening simpler versions of your material.



Making the most of multimedia content

www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/integratingmultimediacontent



- **MULTIMEDIA** The use of multiple forms of media to communicate: i.e. audio, video, text, graphics etc in combination. Examples include electronic greetings cards and online videos.

Collaborative technologies

While an individual might compile an agenda, other trustees can collaborate online and produce board papers and reports using web office tools (e.g. Google Docs) without the need to meet. These tools are of particular benefit if you are working collaboratively on documents between meetings.

Meetings can be conducted entirely virtually via video conferencing using cheap and simple web cams (charity constitutions allowing) or audio conferencing via 0870 numbers. No more excuses for not being able to attend a meeting nor any need to travel long distances.



Web Office Tools

www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/webofficecomparison

Online collaboration tools

www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/onlinecollaboration



Keywords

- **WEB OFFICE TOOLS** describes typical office software (word processor, spreadsheet, personal information manager e.g. Word, Excel, Outlook) available remotely via an internet connection. It means more than one person can work on the same document regardless of location or that individuals can work (and save their updates) away from the office. Google, ThinkFree and Zoho are popular in VCOs.
- **ONLINE COLLABORATION TOOLS** includes project planning tools and any software which can be used by people in different places to collaborate and share information, ideas and resources. Also includes telephone conferencing and video conferencing.
- **VIDEO CONFERENCING** Conducting a conference between two or more participants at different sites by using computer networks to transmit audio and video data.

Better communications

Email, mobile communications and blogs enable better communication between teams. Trustees can set up blogs and allow others to publish comments and entries to stimulate discussion outside meetings.

Email is used by most VCOs but using email mailing lists (a tool that allows you to send a message to a single address, which then distributes it to all members of the group) makes it easier to manage groups and helps ensure no one gets missed. You can also use bulk email software to communicate with much larger groups and you might choose to send email newsletters to keep in direct contact with key recipients.



Signposts

Email mailing lists www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/emailmailinglists

Broadcast email www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/bulkemailsoftware

Cheap telephone conferencing – various providers including
www.thephone.coop/business/telephone/conference-calls.html
and www.powwownow.co.uk



- **BROADCAST EMAIL** Email software service which allows you to manage subscriptions and send large numbers of emails easily and effectively and comply with appropriate legislation.

New opportunities, old risks and liabilities

ICT now offers organisations user-generated content (literally content developed by your users). Whether produced by staff, volunteers or people you don't know, it raises implications for the image and reputation of your organisation. Anything published on the internet becomes very difficult to completely delete; erasing something from a website doesn't erase it from Google. Be wary of the risks of new technology just as you would be wary of those associated with any other means of publication or communication.



ICT Foresight (how developments in technology may affect VCOs in the future) www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/3sf includes reports on Campaigning and Consultation, Online Communities and Fundraising and Giving.

Evaluate opportunities where ICT can help you do more or do better. By all means be an early adopter but don't be a guinea pig for everything. There's nothing more demoralising than an organisation that is continually struggling not only with technology but also its implications. Remember, ICT must be led by a soundly-made business case, not used simply for technology's sake. Could you use the advice of an expert?



ICT Hub suppliers directory directory.ictHub.org.uk/

The need for good old-fashioned management

You can't know everything, you can't foresee the future and you can't predict every mistake or issue in advance. But good old-fashioned management helps. Know what you're doing, who's doing it, what it costs and what the likely risks and implications are.

If you have an up-to-date ICT strategy, you'll know how new media impacts you and your clients. You'll be able to plan for opportunities as they arise and take advantage of them as appropriate.



Key points

- It's important to understand the potential of ICT, but you don't need to predict the future.
- Use technology to support a meaningful activity, not just for the sake of it. Be aware of what your target audience can use – some will still be using older, slower technologies.
- Take advantage of opportunities but let others take the big risks first – you don't always need to be the first to try something.



Action points

1. Get someone on the board to start developing an awareness of what ICT could do in the future. We're not talking about technology revolutions, but we should be thinking 2-3 years ahead.
2. Plan your budgets and strategies far enough ahead to be able to raise funds for what you need to do.
3. Experiment in a safe space. Find out what others are doing and learn from their experiences.



SECTION 9

Supporting yourselves

Using ICT to strengthen governance practice and performance management

What are you responsible for?

Good governance – contributing to an effective trustee board or management committee, working collaboratively outside meetings as well as during them, and keeping informed. Sharing information with stakeholders and engaging local communities.

If ICT is there to improve information management and communication, it's naturally of direct benefit to you in your role as a trustee. So what's in it for you?

Sharing information and feedback

Good ICT can support secure, shared access to documentation. Good management reporting might include granting access to management reports from databases at the press of a button.

You can set up trustee-only websites to share documents, have online discussions and keep in regular contact. Wouldn't it be great to have access to all the board papers from years gone by in one handy place?

Systems can be set up to provide daily, weekly or monthly evaluation reports, all accessible via the web rather than cluttering up an email box. If you're not informed, how do you know what is going on?

Collaborative technologies and web office tools support boards to compile papers and reports online, while email lists help support group communications and will also help you keep track of who said what and when.

Easier supervisory roles

Agree how involved you need to be with ICT. Agree what you need to review, how often and what for. One lead member of the board could take responsibility for overseeing ICT in the organisation. Email allows for easy contact and reporting and the sharing of resources. You could even share project plans using online collaboration tools.

Easier performance management

What information can be easily drawn from your database or management information systems to save staff having to produce complicated and time-consuming management reports? Many databases can now generate appropriate management reports quickly and easily for emailing to whichever trustees need them.

The sooner you have a report, the more quickly you can take any action required and – with appropriate communication tools for discussion with fellow board members – agree a response.



→ **MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM** a specific form of database which enables users to access key management information and generate reports quickly and easily.

Performance management through ICT

There are key areas where trustees can make good use of ICT to help manage the performance of their organisation.

1. Finance – budget, cashflow, spending, projections and models.
2. Human resources – issue reports.
3. Management report – details of activities, requests for support or discussion.
4. Issues report – issues and concerns requiring trustee input.
5. Monitoring, evaluation and outcomes management – data with supplementary narrative reports.
6. Case studies – what have we done lately?

Of course, all this information could be generated by hand and circulated on paper, but that takes considerable resource. With a few simple spreadsheets, a couple of Word documents and a database report, trustees can have a complete overview of their organisation within minutes.

Easier consultation

It's fairly easy to carry out a survey via email or through your website. You can even run an AGM over the internet these days.

Case Study

High Peak CVS and the virtual AGM

High Peak CVS provides services for a wide range of voluntary organisations and is based in rural Derbyshire. Acknowledging the difficulties of travel and attending meetings, it set up a virtual AGM using new technologies to help share the experience.

It set up a website and added content throughout the meeting. It filmed presentations and uploaded the video to YouTube. It posted PowerPoint presentations using Slideshare, uploaded photographs from a digital camera and wrote comments live to the website throughout.

High Peak CVS set up the website for a number of reasons: for those who couldn't attend; to provide a record of the event; to promote the use of technology in voluntary groups; and as a way to gather the community's views about the work they do in the High Peak area. It was a great success and helped those who couldn't attend in person feel involved and still contribute.



highpeakcvsis5.org.uk/ – what happened and how it was done

Not all your client groups will have access to the internet but if you want to be reached directly, if you want to run consultations in a short space of time, and if you want direct and interactive feedback, ICT can really help.



Collaborative working

www.ictHub.org.uk/publications/ICT_Tools_Collaborative_Working

Informal learning

Last but not least is learning. The internet is a rich source of information to help you learn about ICT, governance or anything else. You can browse websites, subscribe to email newsletters, participate in discussion forums and send and receive information. And of course you can use it to find events, book courses, engage in online learning and make arrangements to meet.



Key points

- ICT can help improve the flow of information and communication for you as well as for staff and clients.
- Quick and easy access to information supports better decision-making and keeps you informed.
- Using ICT saves time and money in administration and means information is easily available.
- ICT is a great route to learning and developing expertise.



Action points

1. What could you do as a group to communicate and share information better between meetings?
2. How easy is it for you to monitor performance and use data to make strategic decisions?
3. Do you have a central source of information for trustees? How could you set one up easily and securely?
4. Could you run an AGM (or other meetings) over the internet to improve access for those who can't attend the meeting?

Part C

A summary of standards and resources

70 10. Resources and support Where to find out more

- 70 People to talk to
- 70 Briefing papers
- 71 Governance Hub resources
- 71 ICT Hub resources
- 71 Other resources
- 71 Extended ICT glossary

72 11. Good ICT Governance – a summary



SECTION 10

Resources and support – don't go it alone

Where to find out more

What are you responsible for?

It's a good idea to appoint someone on your board to oversee ICT generally. They might keep more up to date with developments, attend events, talk to other organisations about ICT Governance, etc. Resources and support are available so make the best of them – it's for the benefit of your organisation and clients in the long run.

As well as the information featured in this guide, there are a number of other resources to assist you with your ICT Governance.

People to talk to

- Trusted local advisors www.ictHub.org.uk/articles/local_ict_support.html
- How to use consultants www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/usingconsultants
- Working with IT volunteers www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/workingwithvolunteers
- Suppliers directory directory.ictHub.org.uk/
- Finding IT Volunteers www.it4communities.org.uk

Briefing papers

From the ICT Hub “Guide to Managing ICT in the Voluntary and Community Sector” and Knowledgebase website.

- Databases www.ictHub.org.uk/managing_ICT/databases_1.html
- Email www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/emailtips
- Health and safety www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/healthandsafety
- Security www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/securitybasics
- Web www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/yourwebsitebasics
- Working from home www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/telecommuting
- ICT risk assessment www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/riskassessment

Governance Hub resources

- Code of Good Governance www.governancehub.org.uk/publications.html
- What Management Committees Need to Know www.governancehub.org.uk/publications.html
- Trustee E-learning www.trusteelearning.org
- National Occupational Standards for Trustees www.governancehub.org.uk/publications.html
- Reducing the Risks: A Guide to Trustee Liabilities www.governancehub.org.uk/publications.html

ICT Hub resources

- Managing ICT www.ichub.org.uk/managing_ICT/
- ICT Hub Knowledgebase www.ichubknowledgebase.org.uk
- ICT Hub publications www.ichub.org.uk/publications/
- ICT Hub articles www.ichub.org.uk/articles/
- ICT Hub case studies www.ichub.org.uk/caseStudies/
- ICT Hub research www.ichub.org.uk/research/

Other resources

- Get safe online (internet safety) www.getsafeonline.org/
- Using ICT to improve monitoring and evaluation www.performancehub.org.uk
- ICT Foresight www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

Extended ICT Glossary

- ICT Glossary www.ichub.org.uk/managing_ICT/glossary.html



SECTION II

Good ICT Governance – A Summary

Recommended approach to ICT Governance: SSS – Set, Support and See through

- SET: Set an overall strategy and direction and agree appropriate risks
- SUPPORT: Provide resources and support to staff leading the project
- SEETHROUGH: Hold staff directly accountable for both success and failure.

The SSS model will make a big difference to how ICT impacts on your whole organisation and services. Staff need to know in which direction to go (and why), feel supported, be given the necessary financial (and other) resources and to be held accountable. You're acting as a critical friend, managing risk well, probably getting good value for money and are a good governing board.

The following checklists will support you as an individual trustee and your board in providing effective governance of your ICT, and ensuring you get the best return on investment from ICT for your organisation and its beneficiaries.



Checklist

Summary checklist (for individual trustees)

This checklist should be completed by every member of your trustee board or management committee

- Are you clear what the role of ICT is in your organisation?
- Do you know what ICT can do (and can't do) for you and your organisation?
- Have you read (and do you understand the implications of) the ICT strategy?
- Are you confident in contributing to discussions about the impact of ICT on organisational projects?
- Was ICT included in your induction?
- Do you know who is taking the lead ICT role (and accountability) on your board?
- Is the impact of ICT a priority for you and the organisation?
- Do you understand the risks and implications of ICT in the organisation?
- Are you confident that the ICT policies support safe and effective operations within the organisation?
- Have you agreed the ICT budget and does it support the ICT plans and strategy?
- Are you comfortable asking the right questions about ICT and ICT projects?
- Are you and the board making effective use of ICT for your own work and to support effective decision-making?
- Are you comfortable with the role ICT may play in the future in your organisation?
- Do you know where to go for help and support when you need it?



Checklist

Summary checklist (for boards)

This checklist should be completed by the chair in conjunction with board members

- Are all trustees comfortable with their role around ICT?
- Is ICT included in the induction of all trustees?
- Have you conducted a needs analysis for ICT?
- Have you agreed an ICT strategy, plan and budget?
- Have you engaged senior staff and other trustees as appropriate?
- Have you assessed and developed a plan for risk management?
- Do you have tailored policies for all elements of ICT and communication within your organisation?
- Do you have an asset register of all ICT equipment (and passwords)?
- Have you implemented an effective disaster recovery policy?
- Is ICT considered appropriately in all project discussions?
- Is return on investment and the impact of ICT considered in all project discussions?
- Are you comfortable asking the right questions about ICT and ICT projects?
- Is the board making effective use of ICT to support effective decision-making?
- Have you considered the future implications of ICT on your activities?



Key points

- ICT will impact on almost everything you do. Adopting a model approach helps ensure a safe, effective, efficient organisation making the most of the resources available.
- Once you have processes and systems in place, ICT Governance becomes straightforward, easy to do and will pay for itself with better issue management and more effective resourcing.

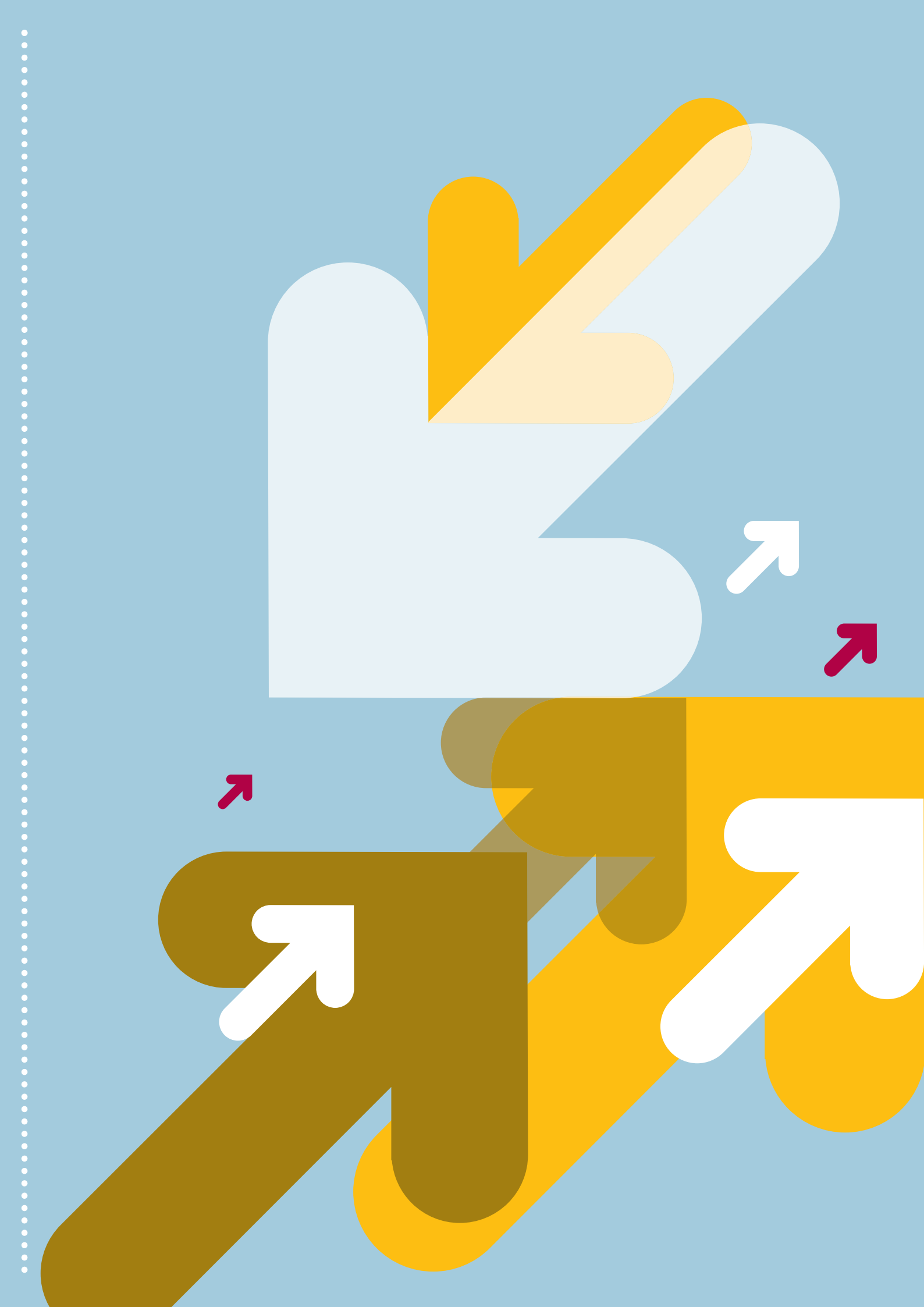


Action points

1. Work through the checklists and identify areas for action.
2. Spend some time developing an action plan as to how you can improve both ICT and overall governance. Once complete, make some time to review the plan at a trustee meeting.

In the end, good ICT Governance comes down to good general governance, sharing responsibilities and being accountable.





ICT Hub

Regent's Wharf
8 All Saints Street
London NI 9RL



E: helpdesk@icthub.org.uk
W: www.icthub.org.uk
HelpDesk: 0800 652 4737

The ICT Hub is a partnership of voluntary and community organisations that provide services to help organisations in the voluntary and community sector benefit from ICT.

Governance Hub

Regent's Wharf
8 All Saints Street
London NI 9RL



E: governance.hub@ncvo-vol.org.uk
W: www.governancehub.org.uk
HelpDesk: 0800 652 4886

The Governance Hub aims to improve the quality of governance within the voluntary and community sector across England by:

- Increasing the supply of trustees and board members, with the range of profiles, skills and experience needed by VCOs.
- Enhancing the knowledge and skills of trustees, board members, senior managers and others involved in governance.
- Enhancing the governance capacity of organisations to deliver their mission, engaging and involving their key stakeholders.
- Promoting good governance in the voluntary and community sector.

ISBN: 978-0719917592



9 780719 917592

£25 Published March 2008

ChangeUp



FUNDED