# Implementation guide

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| Provider name/consortia members | **Cambridgeshire Library Learning Centre** |
| Project title | Using technology to increase community engagement and development (Fenland Farmers) |
| Project summary | This project was conceived with the aim of using ICT and social media to enable the sharing of information and knowledge across the countryside area of Cambridgeshire known as “the Fens”. The sharing of information would aid in the increase of productivity levels and address social isolation through the use of social media. The project wouldbe working with Fenland Farmers to produce a new online resource, purchase and develop the domain [www.fenlandfarmers.org.uk](http://www.fenlandfarmers.org.uk) . the aim of this being to encourage the fens farming community to become self-supportive and pooling their combined knowledge to resolve issues. |
| What were the aims of the project? | * To Promote and enable the sharing of information and knowledge across Fenland to increase farm productivity levels and to address social isolation * To work with Fenland Farmers to produce and online resource : <http://www.fenlandfarmers.org.uk> to encourage the farming community to become self-organising and pool-knowledge. * To increase use of online government and statutory agency information by Fenland Farmers * To upskill Fenland Farmers in the use of Technology * To identify any further training needs , such as Skills for Life needs and address these needs through Library Learning Centres. |
| What did you do? | **What is involved? (list actions as bullets points)**   * Increased development of website/portal * Purchasing web address <http://www.fenlandfarmers.org.uk> * Developing content * Establishing links into the Farming community * Training up farmers to become authors/Editors/administrators/moderators for the site * Establishing links into the Farming community * Developing regular contributors from external sources * Increasing the visitor numbers to the site to **2762** ! (as of 22/3/2011) * Developing collaboration partnerships between agricultural bodies such as the NFU, Farm Stewardship via RSPB, Newcastle University Anaerobic Digestion, Cambridgeshire Acre * Visiting Fenland Farmers across the county on their own premises to carry out training and upskill the farmers in the new technology * Recruiting an Agronomist to the site as a regular contributor and advisor. * Recruiting an administrator/editor/author from Cambridgeshire Tenant Farmers department in Cambridgeshire County Council. * Establishing pathways to further learning |
| What did the project cost, including LSIS funding? | **Mileage costs as a result of direct contact with the farming community and training sessions to enable full use of the platform across Fenland**  **2 days a week December –March 2011**  **Anticipated mileage – 120 miles a week x 12 weeks = 1440 miles x .40p = £576**  **Marketing leaflets £200 ( being printed )**  **Purchase of site name for initial 2 years = £10**  **Staff time**  **14 hours a week x 12 weeks = 168 hours**  **168 hours x £25 per hour staff salary inc oncosts = £4200**  **Total Grant £4986** |
| Impact: what difference did the project make/changes of behaviour in beneficiaries | As a result of the project:   * A recognised local Agronomist was trained up and is giving regular advice to farmers regarding their crops. * Local Farmers were trained and given social media training enabling them to participate in the new Fenland Farmers website, as Authors, editors and Administrators. * Local farmers have in turn passed on these skills and as can be seen from the website – local farmers are now commenting on issues that are pertinent to them * One farmer who as well as being an administrator on the Fenland Farmers site has received as part of the project, sufficient training to enable him to set up his own website <http://laemunns.wordpress.com> . This has directly enabled him to advertise his geese and goose fat subsidiary products from his farm. This has not only saved him money but has allowed him to greatly increase public awareness of his products not only locally but also nationally on the internet as he can now be found easily on Google. * **Disease awareness raised** Disease awareness has been raised on the website during February. In particular the problem with Bulb Fly awareness was raised on the site. Farmers were able to get advice on how to treat this problem with the relevant treatment of their crops. This area of the site will continue to be a major part it enabling farmers to pool their knowledge and share advice with each other which will allowing them to be more productive. * **Crop issues resolves**   During February Farmers in the area had major issues with Sugar beet due to the frost. As a direct result of the website of Farmers were able to get advice and guidance on how to deal with their crop and how to handle it. Having the ability to discuss how getting the crop out of the ground, and what not to do with the remaining crop. They were given advice on not ploughing it back in due to It’s the long term effect.   * **Young Farmers** As a result of the project it has been realised that there is no outlet for Young Farmers in the areas of Wisbech, March or Whittlesey. These areas are heavily farmed areas. Ramsey Young Farmers Chairman Gavin Harris has now agreed to join the Fenland Farmers site so that these groups can be supported via the Fenland Farmers site. * As Facebook is now widely used, especially by the younger generations the site has now been developed sothatPosts to it are published on a Fenland Farmers **Facebook** site. * **Cambridgshire Constabulary** – in particular , Inspector Paul Ormerod has given his support to this project and the site has now incorporated an Ecops link to keep Farmers abreast of local issues. * **Health and Safety Executive Awareness** The “Pledge to Come home safely” campaign run by The Health and Safety Executive(HSE) has been given support by the Fenland Farmers site. This was due in some fact to one of the contributing farmers was involved in a serious farming accident and nearly lost his arm and he and his wanted to promote this campaign to other farmers to ensure other farmers took their safety at work seriously and sign up . * **Shape your place**  As part of the project plan – the Shapeyourplace.org site has been successfully connected up with the Fenland Farmers site. This site covers Wisbech, Chatteris, March and Whittlesey all of which are very agricultural areas in the fens. There is also a link to the website to allow residents easy access to local government and raise community issues such as roads, neighbours and civil issues. * **Enthusiastic Community Cohesion** An example of the Farming community working together was demonstrated in January. When The NFU was initially contacted to inform them of the new Fenland Farmers site remarkably the NFU had already informed and had visited the site due some of to the farming community informing them of the sites existence. The Whittlesey Branch especially were very enthusiastic and fully supportive. * **Further learning** As part of the training farmers were updated on further skills training available to them at their Local Library Learning centres * **RSPB** The RSPB have now become regular contributors to this site. This has enabled them to get the sign post local Fenland farmers with details of the UK Farm Environmental Stewardship scheme . * **Cambridge Acre** Cambridge Acre have become authors on the site. This has enabled them to signpost farmers and give details of the Cambs Acre Fen Adventurers funding scheme giving farmers the ability to apply for the £2.5 million funding. * **Cambridgeshire Tenant Farmers on board.** Cambridgeshire County Council maintains a has a large amount of tenant farmers across the county. Sarah Shepherd who is the Estates Management Officer for the county has now become an administrator on the site and has posted information for the farmers already.   The Tenant farmers newsletter is currently being printed will also be running an article on the site shortly.  The site has was also launched at the tenant Farmers meeting that was held on 27th of January. The site will continue to be used by the Tenant farmers to promote events, raise awareness of issues.   * **National help on Anaerobic Digesters**   Following a farmer mentioning Anaerobic Digesters – Melanie Dunnett of Newcastle University contacted the site and was able to provide information about free workshops for farmers to attend.   * **Cats Protection League** have recently contacted the site asking for help to place their cats on farms and small holdings. This will not only create interest in the site allowing people to explore and find information about other items such as funding and stewardship which they otherwise might not have found. |
| What were the lessons learned?  What tips do you have for other providers? | Developing **trust** is very important. Using the Farmers themselves to communicate between themselves and promote the site worked far better than sending out an email from the County Council.  Go into the community and **talk directly** to them about what is of interest to them and what they would like to read about. If necessary take a 3G laptop out with you (check the coverage) but always take screen shots of your site and paste them into Word before setting out so that if you cannot get onto the internet you at least have something to show the farmers when you arrive!  **Do not rely on emails** to people this alone will not give your site the success it needs. Go into the community on the ground. The best promotion usage comes from people promoting it themselves. If they see that it will benefit themselves then they will promote it to others in the same industry.  The internet is being used far more that is commonly thought in the farming community. If the older generation are not using it then the sons and daughters usually are. However never under estimate how **daunting** some people may find updating pages or posting information on a website. Just commenting may be all that some people wish to do, for some just reading the information is enough.  When talking to groups be prepared to radically change what is put up onto the site if needs be. Furthermore, **be prepared for the unexpected** ! In the case of the Fenland Farmers site – it was completely unexpected to get an approach from the Fenland Cats Protection League about re-homing cats ! But the response from the community was extremely positive and to take a quote from one farmer “Having cats to catch the rats has got to be a much better idea than putting down poison”!  Engage with as many **partner organisations** as you can. These organisations will be able to **capacity build** for you and get to people who may have connections you are unaware of.  **Encourage honest,** open and frank conversation so that the site can be governed by the people themselves and they will develop trust amongst themselves.  **Get the community to feedback** with suggested partners. It is important to stand back and let the site develop with its own volunteers as soon as possible. For a site to be self sustaining it has to be run with volunteers and self interest groups so stand back as soon as possible and let people run it themselves. This gives them the power to solve problems themselves. |
| Further information and key resources | **Top Posts (the past week) week ending 21/3/2011**  [News and Events](http://fenlandfarmers.wordpress.com/news-and-events/) 23 views  [Links](http://fenlandfarmers.wordpress.com/links/) 21 views  [About](http://fenlandfarmers.wordpress.com/about/) 20 views  [Local Talk](http://fenlandfarmers.wordpress.com/beet-crops/) 17 views  [Farmed Environment](http://fenlandfarmers.wordpress.com/environmental/) 13 views  [Machinery](http://fenlandfarmers.wordpress.com/machinery/) 12 views  [Memories](http://fenlandfarmers.wordpress.com/memories/) 11 views  [Potatoes](http://fenlandfarmers.wordpress.com/beet-crops/root-vegetable-crops/potatoes/) 9 views |
| Contact details for further information | [Nyree.scott@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Nyree.scott@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)  0788 1837543 |