

## Community Media Association – Your Community Media! Your Vote 2005!

The Electoral Commission established the New Initiatives Fund to support and promote new ways of raising awareness about voting and democracy. We have awarded grants to local, community and national organisations working with different target audiences across the whole of the UK.

This evaluation report provides information about Community Media Association's Your Community Media! Your Vote 2005! project funded by the New Initiatives Fund. In the report we highlight the aims, objectives and achievements of the project, and lessons learnt by the Community Media Association.

### Introduction

The Your Community Media! Your Vote 2005! project was run by the Community Media Association in the lead-up to the general and local elections of 5 May 2005.

The project consisted of three day-long training workshops delivered in London, Manchester and Inverness targeting programme makers. A website with information, advice and public service announcements (PSAs) was also produced. The PSAs were developed by community groups as part of the project, and available for broadcast from the website. Finally a handbook was produced and distributed to workshop participants.

### Aims and objectives

The objectives of Your Community Media! Your Vote 2005! were to:

- increase awareness and/or understanding of the election and government applicable in the UK;
- promote voter participation in areas where community media projects provide election programming;

- provide community media projects with the information and resources needed to produce imaginative programming while abiding by the regulations set for broadcasters during the election period; and
- produce a set of guidelines for use by community broadcasters during elections.

### Funding

A grant of **£28,150** was awarded in April 2005.

### Target outcomes

The target outcomes of the project were:

- 40 new election programmes produced by community media broadcasters;
- 90% of workshop participants understand their responsibilities under the regulations for broadcasters;
- 90% of workshop participants can explain the UK electoral process;
- election programming reaches up to 250,000 people per week; and
- 6,000 visits per month to the website.

## How successful was the project?

Overall the project appears to have achieved all of its key objectives and targets except for some that relate to the website.

An independent evaluator was hired to assess the project's outcomes. The methods used included evaluation forms from the training seminars and interviews with a selection of people involved in the project.

Overall, participants felt the workshops were useful and increased their confidence about broadcasting during the election. They also felt it was beneficial to meet with others from the community media sector.

A total of 94% of workshop participants felt they had an excellent or good understanding of the electoral process after the workshop and 81% felt their level of understanding of the electoral process had improved

as a result of attending the workshop. At the end of the project, 93% of interviewees felt able to explain the UK electoral process.

A total of 50% of interviewees had used the website. Development of the site took longer than anticipated and the Community Media Association was forced to develop an interim area for the project within their existing site. This meant that they were unable to draw statistics for visitors to the site

during this interim period. The website was finished, but only a few days before the election. It is their intention for it to be an ongoing resource for the sector, updating information for future elections.

Based on audience figures for each community media station involved in the project, it is estimated that the collective audience of the project's broadcasting reach was 650,000.

The project produced 48 programmes with an estimated 57 hours of programming, and a further 10 public service announcements. Most people interviewed felt the PSAs were successful at engaging people in thinking about the electoral process.

The guidance handbook was well received, with some improvements suggested. A total of 94% of workshop participants assessed the handbook as good or excellent, while 86% of interviewees said they used the guidelines to prepare programmes or write radio station policies.

### Good practice

- Working in partnership with experts helped the project to provide high quality information for the participants.
- Holding the workshops in different locations with regional delivery partners helped the project to reach as many organisations as possible.

- People were excited about the long-term impact of this project and they planned to cover elections in the future; not just general elections.
- The website was useful, especially in registering for courses and downloading PSAs.

### Lessons learnt

Projects of a similar nature can learn from the following lessons:

- The project would have benefited from a longer lead-in time, as it would have been possible to attract more attendees. At least eight weeks before an election is preferable.
- Using email lists and the web to promote events gave mixed results. Some groups responded quickly to email but others did not find out about the opportunities in time.
- There was a delay in getting the dedicated website up and running, and it did not launch until just before the election. In the meantime it was hosted on the Community Media Association's main website.

### Further information

For further information about this project please contact:  
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Further information about the New Initiatives Fund and the The Electoral Commission can be found at: [www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)

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