

# DRAFT

## Technology Sanity Check for Branch/State projects

### ***Introduction***

For "large" AAUW projects (those that take more than a few weeks or involve more than a couple of people) there is probably a "technology" component, whether or not those who start the project think about it in that way. At some point relatively early in the project, it is suggested that the members running the project confer with a "tech-savvy" member of the branch (or another adjacent branch) to make sure that there isn't another way to approach the project that would improve everyone's efficiency and effectiveness.

This document is intended as a guideline for a discussion between the project manager/project team and a tech-savvy member. The outcome of the discussion is a report to the president on the technology strategies chosen for the project implementation and an assessment of the risks associated with those choices. This report need be no more formal than the culture of the organization requires: a page or so, or a 15 minute conversation should be sufficient. The goal is just to ensure that these issues have been considered.

It is emphasized that there is no right answer to these questions, and the comments included here are only guidelines that may give some suggestions as to what are the options and risks.

### ***Document Production***

#### **1. What kinds of documents (flyers, reports, web pages, etc.) are predicted?**

The answers to these questions will be a primary factor in determining what kinds of software products are needed to produce the documents. Listing the software involved will be a key part of the final report. Considerations here are whether the software is well matched to the tasks at hand and whether it is "standard" software that will make it easy to transfer the documents to others.

Of course the software used depends primarily on the software available to the person willing to do the work – but if there's a mismatch do consider it a risk factor that will mean that the work may need to be redone.

#### **2. Will information be used in more than one kind of document?**

Large projects repurpose content in flyers, e-mail announcements, Web pages, etc. If different people are working on these, make sure that they can communicate effectively – i.e. that they are not using incompatible software packages that will mean the information needs to be retyped.

#### **3. Will the documents be reused -- in later projects or in this project in another year?**

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If this project will be redone in a later year or might be picked up by another branch, think about how the documents can be transferred to the next project team. It's also likely that documents produced for one project (e.g. a branch meeting on EF) might be used for another project (e.g. a fundraiser). If at all possible, you do **not** want to pass the documents around in hard copy. This means that you need to think about saving the documents in ways that will be read and edited by others (so they don't have to start from scratch), and in a place that it can be found. This may affect your recommendations on software choices.

## **4. What risks are associated with the plan for storing the documents?**

Not to put too fine a point on it, but you don't want 200 hours of work product sitting on someone's home machine's hard drive. Make sure there are backups. Make sure there are off-site backups. Make sure someone other than the person responsible knows how to find the backups. Of course, if it wouldn't be a "disaster" to recreate everything from scratch, then you don't need to worry about this.

## ***Team Communication***

### **1. What kind of e-mail list will be used?**

The options for communication are many, but e-mail (with centralized or distributed address list maintenance, moderated or unmoderated posting, etc.) can greatly speed communication. Of course, if there are team members who don't have e-mail, there will need to be plans for getting them the information that is posted to the list. You may also need to consider privacy issues as the communication moves online.

### **2. What are the options for "real-time" communication?**

Is everyone geographically close with flexible schedules? If not, conference calls (using the phone company's "three-way calling") can work for groups that aren't too large. For groups where everyone has Internet access, consider chat rooms. Commercial conference call lines are another option.

### **3. Do the communications need to be archived?**

This may be important to bring people "up to speed" on projects that last several months. You can designate a "scribe" to save all the important messages and forward them as someone joins the team, but it is probably best to choose your e-mail list strategy so that it supports your answer here – some, such as groups.yahoo.com, provide automatic archiving.

### **4. Do documents need to be stored/exchanged?**

Will it be possible to exchange documents as e-mail attachments, or is some other exchange mechanism required? Is there a webmaster for the project? Does the project need a scheduling system like that at [www.eproject.com](http://www.eproject.com) or other strategies so that different people can be updating the schedule or other documents at the same time?