

THE INTERNET

The emergence of the Internet for public use has revolutionized the way groups can research information and advertise themselves and their ideas. Groups' efficiency and the breadth and depth of their researching abilities have both increased. The Internet expands your outreach abilities, allowing you to recruit directly through your website and advertise your mission and organization on the Internet. Having an informational and well thought-out web-site can also give your organization more credibility and stability in the eyes of the public. Websites can be simple, one-page sites with a mission statement and contact information, or elaborate interactive pages including on-line databases and action tools.

DEVELOPING A WEBSITE

- ✓ If your website needs are relatively simple, you can design and build your own website even without much computer experience.
- ✓ Tap into the resources of your group to create a website—is someone a computer programmer? Graphic designer? Photographer?
- ✓ Citizens' Committee for New York offers free web development training classes and free easy to use, interactive websites for neighborhood associations; visit www.citizensnyc.org for more information.
- ✓ Fund for the City of New York offers low-cost website development and programming classes, which are very useful in learning how to maintain and update your site.
- ✓ If you want to create a more complex site, perhaps with an online database, check the resources listed at the end of this packet for information about free and low-cost web consultants.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR WEBSITE:

1. **Educate the Public.** Websites allow you to post information and facts about your organization/issue. Features such as a calendar to advertise events and news bulletins help to educate and involve the public. You can design your website so visitors can download or print out materials your group produces, such as fact sheets or environmental education materials. For example Environmental Defense has printable cards to help you avoid buying endangered fish species at the market.
2. **Make it Compelling.** Use compelling text and pictures on your site. Keep your website easy to read and navigate. If your site is too cluttered the message will get lost.
3. **Don't repeat what has already been done.** Rather than re-writing already published information, create links on your site to relevant pages or documents on other group's sites. This not only keeps your site simpler and less cluttered, but also encourages communication and networking between groups.
4. **Market your site.** Be sure to advertise your site in all of your publications. Materials you hand out to the public will lead people to your site where they can get more information, send email to officials, etc. Also, exchange links with other groups to increase publicity further.
5. **Take Action.** Websites are important advocacy tools, and are a great way to get people involved in your campaign. They make it easy to take action. For example, some sites allow you, with the click of a button, to email a letter to your city-council person or automatically send a fax to the president. For less elaborate sites, you can just post information on how to contact your elected officials and talking points on what to say to them.
6. **Conduct Constant Outreach.** Simply by including your organization's contact information and ways for people to get involved (e.g. coming to an event or meeting, taking action, etc.) on your website, you are doing outreach. There is also technology that you can include on your website allowing volunteers

to sign up directly on line. You can even design your website to capture the contact information of anyone who takes action on your site, thereby increasing the size of your database/ mailing list.