

Connect Mount Alexander



Project overview

This project aimed to connect the Mount Alexander Shire community through events and activities listed on the Connect Mount Alexander website.

The project included delivering education and training to older people and community groups to support them to use the website.

Project description

Connect Mount Alexander provides community organisations, clubs and groups with an accessible, central platform to promote events and activities. The directory includes listings for social and health support services.

The project aimed to improve older people's understanding of how to use Connect Mount Alexander, and increase the use of the website for this cohort.

It also sought to address social isolation and loneliness among older people in the area.

Project model

- Community consultation identified key content and the look and feel of the directory.
- The site launched in December 2017.
- Training and support materials were provided.
- The training sessions have also helped to improve older people's computer skills, while the website itself allows people to access social and community connections and learning opportunities.
- Volunteers in the community help people register for and use the site.

Budget

Total project cost	\$20,000
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Project challenges

The main project challenge was the limited use of technology among older community members, and inconsistent availability of internet services in the shire.

This was overcome by:

- connecting with established groups of older, tech-savvy people to help with training and promotion, such as U3A, and volunteers at community houses

- developing easy systems for editors of community newsletters and others to export and distribute information from the website to people who might not be able to access it themselves
- developing an offline registration form, so groups that are not tech savvy or do not have an email address can still include their events and activities on the directory.

Project outcomes

More than 100 groups have registered to use the site, and there have been more than 100 events published.

As part of training and support for the site, four information sessions were held.

As well as introducing people to the site, these training sessions helped older people in the community develop computer skills.

The shire has also partnered with the Central Victorian Volunteers Service to help match volunteers with suitable volunteer opportunities.

Accessible promotional materials have also been developed, using simple language and large text.

Project sustainability

The site is being maintained by the shire, and is supported by core funding.

The Connect Mount Alexander model could be replicated in other local governments. Mount Alexander Shire is happy to share the concept and layout of the website with others.

The project also ensures sustainability via a 'train the trainer' model to help community groups register and use the site.

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