

An elderly man with a grey beard and glasses, wearing a dark blue sweater over a patterned shirt, and an elderly woman with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a purple hoodie, are looking at a smartphone together. The man is pointing at the screen while the woman smiles. The background is a blurred indoor setting with a painting and a plant.

SeniorSurf

Improve your digital guidance activities

GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

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It pays off to take good care of digital guidance activities. The activities should be developed, tutors supported and changes in society observed. In well-managed digital guidance activities, the organiser is aware of what is happening in guidance sessions and how tutors are doing. Here are some tips on how to develop your digital guidance activities.

All activities require maintenance to stay up and running, including digital guidance activities. Sometimes it is worth questioning established habits, as they can become even better with a little tweaking. Be sure to enjoy it when you get everything rolling along nicely.



APPRECIATE YOUR TUTORS

Get to know your tutors, as they are your most valuable resource. It is useful to know why they want to be digital tutors. What motivates them? What encourages them to carry on? Might they even be willing to recommend the activities to their friends?



Volunteers are motivated primarily by the desire to help others. Digital tutors also value the opportunity to keep up with the changing digital world and learn new things while guiding others. So be sure to give them opportunities to learn something new.

Take a genuine interest in your tutors and their wellbeing. You should listen to your tutors, as they can often give you the best information for improving your guidance activities.

ENHANCE THE SKILLS OF YOUR TUTORS

The digital world and the devices we use are changing and evolving rapidly. Tutors are faced with new issues and challenges in their guidance sessions, which they have the opportunity to solve. Tutors' skills will naturally improve over time, but it is also worth organising training sessions for them on different topics.



Guiding becomes more effective when tutors' skills are constantly updated. For example, if your tutors are unfamiliar with the operating systems that they are guiding the customers through, arrange a training session to introduce these operating systems to them. This gives tutors more confidence in guiding. Tutors themselves are the best people to tell you what they want to learn more about, so be sure to actively ask them what kind of training they would like to receive.

Tutors are interested in exploring the digital world from different perspectives. That is why you should occasionally organise events on a slightly different topic, such as artificial intelligence or gerontechnology.

It is also important to provide your tutors with knowledge and content on softer topics, such as human interaction, different learning and teaching styles or memory disorders.

How can all this be done, especially in a small organisation with limited resources? Make the most of cooperation! Let tutors know about webinars and briefings organised by other organisations, or organise events together with your partners. Tutors can also organise events for each other, but sometimes it is good to have outside speakers. Local institutions such as adult education centres, banks, libraries, businesses or educational institutions may be willing to help.

SUPPORT AND THANK YOUR TUTORS

Be sure to thank your tutors regularly for their voluntary work. Although they often receive warm feedback from customers, they should also receive it from the organiser. If possible, organise occasional gatherings with tutors over a cup of coffee. At these gatherings, you can discuss general issues related to guidance activities.



It is also important to help tutors get to know each other and build team spirit. If you have several tutors involved in your activities, arrange for them to meet and talk to each other. Make sure that new tutors are well integrated into an existing tutor group. If there are only a few tutors, you can perhaps help them get to know tutors from other organisations or volunteers involved in other volunteer work.

**Tutors appreciate peer support – let them know where they can find it!
After all, who would want to work alone all the time?**

PLAN YOUR COMMUNICATION ACCORDING TO SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Finding the right balance between the number of tutors and the number of customers is often a juggle that you have to learn to live with. Changes in the volume of activities should be made as a result of longer-term monitoring.



As the guidance sessions become more established and find their audience, a queue may form. There may be a need for new tutors, more guidance sessions or a completely new location. If tutors are hard to find, be patient and try to communicate through the right channels in as many ways as possible. Could it help to publish an inspiring article in which a tutor describes how much fun it is to be a tutor? Could you find suitable partners in your local area who could help you find enough new tutors or with whom you could expand your guidance activities?

If your tutors are not busy enough, think of ways to boost your advertising to gain more customers. Have you shared information on your guidance activities with local banks, associations, municipal senior services, etc.? Or would it help to change the location or the time of the guidance sessions?



KEEP UP TO DATE WITH GUIDANCE TOPICS

sessions? You should periodically compile statistics on guidance topics, e.g. by reviewing sampling periods of a few weeks. You can ask tutors to write down both the types of devices and the topics covered in the guidance sessions. This way, you know your customers' actual guidance needs and can ensure that tutors are able to advise them on these topics.



If you notice a new topic on the rise, you can anticipate the training needs of your tutors. If you find that a particular feature of an online service raises a lot of questions in the guidance sessions, you can ask the service provider about it. You can also organise a briefing on frequently asked topics for your customers. This will also give you the opportunity to promote your activities and gain new customers.

You should also make use of networks and statistics published by other actors involved in guidance activities. What matters is that you are interested in the content of the guidance sessions and the topics and devices that are currently relevant.

MAKE QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENTS OF THE ACTIVITIES



The organiser of digital guidance activities should carefully consider what kind of statistics will reflect the development of their activities and thus be useful for planning, communication and reporting. The type of information collected will be determined by factors such as the funder’s reporting guidelines and the indicators needed to meet the objectives set.

The information generally collected in the context of digital guidance activities includes at least the following:

- the number of clients in individual guidance sessions (number of sessions)
- the hours spent on individual guidance sessions
- the number of group guidance sessions, briefings and other events related to digital guidance activities and their participants
- the number of active tutors
- the gender and age of customers (i.e. participants) and tutors. *The gender and age distribution can be recorded based on sampling or estimation, for example. It is advisable to look at the age distributions used by the funder and use them.*

The help of tutors is usually needed to collect information. Make the reporting as simple as possible and ask your tutors for their opinion as well. The easiest way to record information is to do so immediately after each guidance session. You should also explain to your volunteers why the information is needed. All those involved in the activities should have the common goal of securing adequate funding and operational continuity.

USEFUL EXAMPLES FOR STATISTICS

Statistics on individual guidance sessions				
Guidance session	Customers	Tutors	Hours	
Guidance 1 September at 10:00–12:00	3	1	2	
Guidance 4 September at 12:00–15:00	7	2	6 (2 x 3h)	
Statistics on group guidance sessions, briefings, etc.				
Activity	Number	Participants	Encounters	
Group: iPhone basics, 5 sessions	1	10	50*	
Briefing 3 May “Security tips”	1	42	42	
<i>*If everyone has been present each time.</i>				
Example of annual statistics				
	Number	men	women	other
Customers of individual guidance sessions	10	n	n	n
Activities (groups, briefings etc.)	2			
Participants in groups and briefings	52	n	n	n
Active tutors*	5	n	n	n
<i>*Those who have attended guidance sessions and other activities.</i>				

If the same group meets several times with the same participants and focuses on the same topic, this should be counted as one event. The number of participants is the total number of people in the group, while the number of encounters is counted separately for each meeting.

MAKE QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENTS OF THE ACTIVITIES

It is also worth making qualitative assessments of the activities. Assessments should be carried out from the viewpoint of customers, tutors, organisers and partners. Are the different actors satisfied, what could be done better? What works, what does not? Where do different actors need more support? Do the activities meet the objectives set for them?



Through surveys and discussions, you can also monitor the satisfaction and wellbeing of tutors in digital guidance activities. Happy tutors are the foundation of your activities.

Once you know what works, enforce it. If you encounter any shortcomings, do everything you can to improve the activities.

Share your results and communicate your achievements with courage!

KEEP UP WITH THE CHANGING SOCIETY

It can feel challenging to follow the changes and keep up with them. However, it is enough to follow the normal social dialogue. Knowing where public services and digital developments are heading will help you anticipate what is to come. Follow the discussions and consider how they could relate to the digital guidance activities. If you know that new online services will be introduced or changes to existing ones are in the pipeline, you can prepare for questions about them in advance.



Cooperative networks are useful here too. Different actors always hear and recognise different things. When you share knowledge and expertise, you all stay better informed.



MAKE A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO COOPERATE BETTER

Always keep the option of cooperation in mind. Good cooperation benefits all parties. Cooperation should be maintained and deepened, and networks should be expanded to include new partners where necessary.

Be open-minded: a new partner may be found in a completely different field. Cooperation grows into a strong partnership through active and open engagement. It requires patience and willpower, but at best, all parties will gain added value in their own activities.

Cooperation enhances the use of existing resources. Communication is reinforced when several actors share the same information, learning increases when training is organised jointly, and activities improve when people are willing and brave enough to work on them together.

Networks provide the knowledge, skills and peer support to help you keep going. You can discuss challenges and successes with partners and develop activities together. Ideas from other organisations often reinforce your own expertise. Simply speaking out loud can spark new ideas, and you do not have to face problematic issues alone. A good partner can challenge you to improve your activities even further.

**Explore, think,
assess and learn.
Remember to cooperate.
You do not need to
achieve everything
at once.**

Try things out and be patient. Remember to thank and praise yourself, too!

With these tips, you can take your digital guidance activities to the next level. Ask for additional tips and assistance from the SeniorSurf services of the Finnish Association for the Welfare of Older Adults.