

E-Democracy.Org Strategic Plan 2007-09

Adopted by the E-Democracy.Org Board 26 July 2007

Mission: E-Democracy.Org is a non-profit, non-partisan, volunteer-based project whose mission is to expand participation and build stronger democracies and communities through the power of information and communication technologies and strategies.

Goal 1 - Engagement: Strengthen, expand, and diversify engagement through effective and meaningful online discussions and information exchange on public issues

Strategy 1.1 Expand number of Issues Forums dramatically

- a. Establish new Issues Forums in areas with start-up funding or broadly with major expansion support
- b. Enable Issues Forums to be created in communities based on volunteer initiative
- c. Create marketing material and training curricula for both in-person and online use
- d. Share Issues Forum model through partners and affiliates whose missions align with ours
- e. Integrate the Issues Forums development and recruitment processes into future technology to enhance scalability
- f. Establish annual Issues Forum growth goals and involve local committees/chapters in efforts to spread forums to nearby communities

Strategy 1.2 Deepen support for existing Issues Forums

- a. Increase registrations and level of participation in existing forums
- b. Increase and sustain diverse participation including efforts to raise “new voices” in local Issues Forums
- c. Connect the diverse voices in Issues Forums with community leaders including elected officials, government staff, and area media
- d. Identify and promote local volunteer roles such as discussion starters, content gatherers, and new member greeters
- e. Create educational content and training that helps participants promote and support a civil discussion environment
- f. Expand civic relationships among individual participants within forums and over time across communities
- g. Strengthen support for local committee/chapter infrastructure, focus resources on active Issues Forums and define local initiatives in good standing
- h. Establish relationships among local committee/chapter leaders across the network
- i. Create alternate opportunities to discuss regional/state/provincial, national, and international issues to preserve the local focus in local Issues Forums.

Goal 2 - Information and Civic Education: Increase the use and relevance of information resources about elections, governance, the media, and public affairs to help address public challenges

Strategy 2.1 Strengthen election information and voter education efforts

- a. Leverage increased election season participation to support broader E-Democracy.Org efforts

- b. Promote online candidate debates
- c. Continue innovations in election information gathering and promotion, and widely disseminate tools such as MyBallot.Net
- d. Share “election toolkit” experiences such as wiki-based election links, online voter guides, and candidate statement videos across the network

Strategy 2.2 Review existing election information and civic education projects and where appropriate, develop proposals to fund ongoing work or new initiatives

- a. Develop a strategy to effectively use volunteers to generate public affairs or election-related content on our existing wiki

Goal 3 - Best Practices and Tools: Develop and disseminate best practices and tools to promote community conversation and engagement, civic education, and information exchange

Strategy 3.1 Use open source tools to the greatest extent possible and work to ensure that major investments in our primary software platforms are released under common open source licenses

- a. Engage Issues Forums leaders and participants in envisioning future forum technology enhancements
- b. Actively support the formation of a developer community for Groupserver (and other open source software used by E-Democracy.Org) to help it become a leading open source tool for civic engagement and community participation
- c. Experiment with and evaluate the potential of new or emerging open source tools for online citizen media and citizen engagement, as well as commercial services with open APIs (YouTube, Flickr, Google Maps, etc.)

Strategy 3.2 Share knowledge and learn from others

- a. Participate in national/international conferences, online communities of practice, and national/international organizations supporting democracy and citizen engagement.
- b. Play a leadership role in the democracy and online citizen engagement field by convening other leaders online and in-person
- c. Promote innovation across the field and work closely with researchers to build and document knowledge and experiences of E-Democracy.Org
- d. Engage leaders in e-participation, e-advocacy, online campaigning, and related fields from across the political spectrum and around the world, in united non-partisan efforts enhancing democracy for all

Goal 4 - Promote Active Citizenship: Empower participants with online skills and experiences to have an impact on their communities and governments

Strategy 4.1 Develop projects and features that support mission and goals

- a. Expanding beyond Issues Forums, deepen the local democracy online experience with sustainable or special short-term online civic engagement activities and efforts that promote greater online access to democratic processes
- b. Explore deployment of tools such as event calendars, online community surveys, forums for neighborhood/neighbourhood “life” and local problem-solving, time-limited “town hall” online events, citizen media blogs, wikis, videos and audio podcasts, online events and consultation

tools, and other innovations which effectively extend our democratic mission

- c. Encourage local committees/chapters to foster unique projects based on local priorities and share their investment in models and technology across the entire network. Encourage local efforts to avoid duplication, and whenever possible work with other successful non-partisan efforts in their community
- d. Establish input mechanisms to prioritize, implement, and evaluate projects and initiatives

Strategy 4.2 Actively engage people from diverse and less represented communities to participate in Issues Forums and other e-democracy projects

- a. Expand existing capacity for outreach in less represented communities
- b. Promote digital inclusion training and efforts that raise the voices of those less connected
- c. Develop network-wide social inclusion and outreach strategies to be deployed locally
- d. Encourage participation of volunteers with diverse political viewpoints, including those in local political minorities and majorities, who support our non-partisan mission and methods

Goal 5 - Organizational Capacity and Sustainability: Maintain an ethical, stable, and financially strong organization of volunteers and staff that effectively and efficiently responds to growing and changing expectations, opportunities, and responsibilities

Strategy 5.1 Build the organizational infrastructure to support goals

- a. Strengthen the Board's ability to govern
- b. Recruit additional Board members to meet the evolving needs of the organization
- c. Strengthen organization's ability to effectively manage projects
- d. Fairly compensate staff, contractors, and others whose ongoing roles are substantially beyond the level of volunteers
- e. Increase number of volunteers, provide training, and effectively engage them in roles at all levels of the organization.
- f. Manage finances efficiently and effectively
- g. Manage public reporting effectively – taxes, filings, etc., as well as communication with stakeholders, partners, supporters, participants
- h. Protect Issues Forums from potential legal or political threats including liability by establishing structures and mechanisms to protect organizational projects, local committees/chapters, and volunteers
- i. Maintain U.S. pro-bono legal support and seek support in non-U.S. countries with Issues Forums
- j. Identify and work with partner organizations with skills or technologies that complement our own and share similar goals
- k. Develop a privacy policy to protect personal information that acknowledges the "public life" nature of our forums and programs

Strategy 5.2 Develop effective evaluation structures, tools, implementation, compilation, and reporting

- a. Evaluate both the scalability and sustainability of initiatives
- b. Build oversight and evaluation into every Board meeting agenda
- c. Ensure that every new project or initiative has an associated evaluation mechanism and review process

Strategy 5.3 Fund the necessary organizational infrastructure to support goals

- a. Increase grant funding for projects and operations; to do this, improve grant-writing ability and

success

- b. Create compelling case for contributions of all kinds
- c. Increase individual contributions
 - o From individual Issues Forum participants
 - o From wealthy individuals who care about community, democracy, and the Internet/new media
 - o From individuals who support E-Democracy.Org's work and activities
- d. Increase earned income through project work, speaking, consulting, and training services
- e. Sell products such as print versions of the Issues Forum Guidebook, etc.
- f. Seek specific grants, dedicated donations, or other financial/volunteer resources when implementing new projects or initiatives that are not directly related to our core mission of supporting local Issues Forums.
- g. Establish a sustainable network-wide revenue model that includes local support, either individual or institutional, to cover the costs of hosting and support for local Issues Forum and projects
- h. Create cost effective mechanisms for local chapters to raise their own funds, for specific projects or events, that do not conflict with network-wide fundraising efforts
- i. Deploy fund raising methods and revenue models that conform to the national cultures, expectations, and legal constraints in each country in which E-Democracy.Org operates

Strategy 5.4 Systematize public and media relations work on behalf of E-Democracy.Org

- a. Seek volunteers or agencies willing to provide in-kind expertise on how to package and communicate key messages
- b. Develop full complement of communications products including fact sheets, brochures, video clips, audio interviews, information packets for potential major donors/foundations, etc.
- c. Make use of interactive tools, including the E-Democracy.Org project blog, to disseminate best practices and generate more interest in and awareness of E-Democracy.Org's work
- d. Redesign current static "www.e-democracy.org" website so it's useful, helpful, informative, and usable, integrate forums.e-democracy.org and other primary services into redesign efforts
- e. Explore disseminating project updates and online citizen participation news via e-mail newsletters

Strategy 5.5 Build global structure to support and reflect local needs and broad, continuous expansion

- a. Develop local leadership and governance structures, including strong input into future national/regional chapter associations and international Board activities
- b. Define requirements to effectively support local governance structures and autonomy
- c. Create clear mechanism for local committees/chapters that want to disassociate from E-Democracy.Org and take Issues Forums independent
- d. Develop strategies and methods for expanding into non-English speaking countries
- e. Create local support and decision making structures in countries with multiple projects

The mission and top-level goals for E-Democracy.Org were adopted in prior years. This strategic plans lays out the detailed strategy as adopted on July 26, 2007. It was crafted with extensive consultation including a survey of over 300 of our forum participants and supporters.

To contact the E-Democracy.Org Board, e-mail team@e-democracy.org or visit our website for more information: <http://e-democracy.org>