



biodiversa

The ERA-NET promoting European research on biodiversity

Annex 1

Practical method note 7

Commissioning and working with
video





COMMISSIONING AND WORKING WITH VIDEO

Hiring a professional film company to make a short video about key research findings can be a powerful and highly professional way to communicate messages to broad audiences, if sufficient budget is available.

Projects on a much smaller budget have the option of creating their own video, and this guide provides some advice on how this can be approached.

MAKING VIDEOS

With the low cost of digital video equipment and the integration of video recorders of sufficient quality for online streaming on most mobile phones nowadays, combined with the ready availability of free and easy-to-use video-editing software (e.g. Windows Moviemaker,

Apple iMovie, YouTube video editing function), producing video content is now within easy reach of most researchers.

SOME KEY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN WORKING WITH VIDEO CONTENT INCLUDE:

- * Plan thoroughly and write a script – this will ensure only the required shots are captured and will make editing much easier.
- * Spend time thinking about the story, and tell it like a story with a clear beginning, middle and end.
- * Try to come up with some memorable visuals such as some sort of visual metaphor that sums up the research findings, a spectacular location, or something entertaining that will help the key ideas stay in people's minds.
- * Turn the script into a 'story board' - little sketches that convey what will happen visually for each section of your script.
- * Pay attention to the sound – if possible use an external microphone for interviews, or make sure the speaker is near enough to the camera's built-in microphone, and be aware of background noise.
- * Always use a tripod for filming static shots and avoid zooming or moving the camera around unless it is absolutely necessary.
- * Make use of editing software – use titles, transitions and effects to convey meaning and to make the video look more polished. However, be careful about over-using effects as this can be distracting and may look unprofessional.
- * Get clearance before filming starts. Obtain signed consent forms from participants and use only copyright-cleared materials for things like images and soundtracks.
- * Make videos available in as many formats as possible to improve accessibility. This could include You Tube, Vimeo, podcasts, embedded videos in the project website, and links to download files in .mp4 and .wmv formats.
- * The optimum length of a video on You Tube is said to be between 2-3 minutes – to keep the audience watching to the end. Try to keep the



film to 5 minutes or less, since this will make file sizes manageable if it is to be integrated into a podcast or viewed where internet speeds are limited.

- * Retain viewer interest by making videos entertaining where possible and use a variety of styles and content. For example, include footage of expert interviews, site visits/tours, documentary, biographical, and profiles.
- * Attempt to make videos look as professional as possible by adding introductory titles and end credits.

- * Ensure the video is promoted. Simply putting a video online won't necessarily get any views. The video should be integrated into a knowledge exchange and communications plan. Just embedding it in your project website won't help if only a few people are viewing the website. It can be particularly useful to invest in social media to increase views of online videos (see [practical method note 10](#) on Social Media).
- * Do not be averse to just trying to use video. Learn by doing it and seek constructive feedback from colleagues to improve your video production.

COMMISSIONING VIDEOS

Most of the same points apply when commissioning video, except the professionals will take care of much of the process. Here are a few key points for working with film-makers:

- * Although many film-makers will be able to help refine the story, it is still necessary to provide them with the source material. Researchers have the best understanding of their work and should go to a film-maker with a few different ideas about how to tell their story, rather than just sending them the latest paper or policy brief and expecting the film maker to convey the story in an effective way.
- * Think about who should be interviewed and in which locations. Every extra day of filming on location will add to the budget, so if everyone can be gathered in a key location, this will minimize the number of filming days and save on costs.
- * Once it is decided what is required for the film to be made, a price can be negotiated. There will be an element of negotiation to achieve

outcomes and it may be necessary to scale back the ambitions for the production depending on the available budget.

- * Ask the film-maker if they can provide a cut-down 'promotional' version of the film within the price or for a small additional fee. This can be an effective way of creating an additional version of the film that may be more relevant to a generalist audience and can help expand who accesses the material.
- * Make sure the draft version of the film is carefully checked and provide detailed comments regarding things that need to be changed. Take time at this point to consult with the rest of the research team, rather than going back and forth with lots of edits, or colleagues objecting to content after the film is finished.
- * Get copies of the film in lots of different formats; lower resolution for putting online and higher resolution for showing on larger screens.

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The BiodivERsA Stakeholder Engagement Handbook is available online at <http://www.biodiversa.org/577>



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