



Free Digital Tools for Charities

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Free digital tools for charities

“Going digital” certainly doesn’t mean just using digital tools and is much more about the culture of an organisation. That being said, digital tools can open up significant areas to explore, save you time and ultimately allow charities to do more good. There are thousands of digital tools out there that can help charities, but which ones should you use? Well we’ve put together a list of 13 tools that might be worth exploring for charities, and even better than that, if you are a registered charity, they are all free!

We’ve (loosely) grouped them into four areas: Communications, Design, Operations, All-in-one.



Design



ADOBE SPARK <https://spark.adobe.com/>

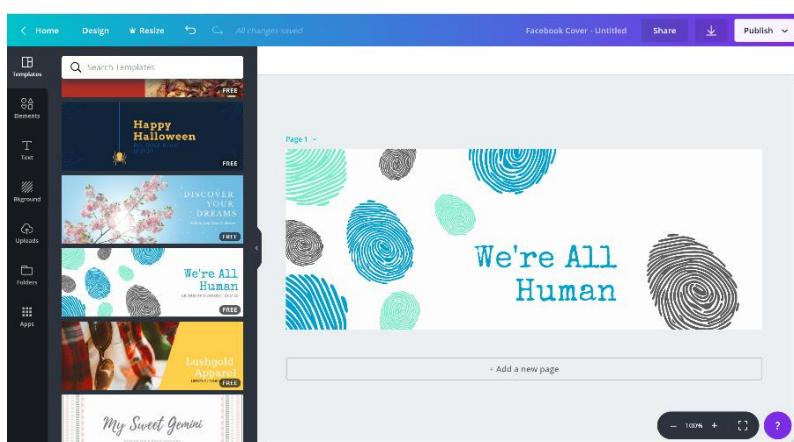
Adobe Spark is an online tool for quickly creating engaging graphics with a range of features and inbuilt photos. With a range of templates from social media posts to flyers, non-designers can make professional looking graphics in minutes. The free version does leave you with a Adobe Spark watermark in the bottom corner, but it is hardly noticeable on most social media posts. It is amazing quick and intuitive to use, meaning absolute beginners can make a social media post in minutes.



CANVA <https://www.canva.com/>

Canva is very similar to Adobe Spark and the good news is that the free version of Canva doesn't leave you with any watermarks at all. Whilst it doesn't have quite the range of Adobe Spark, it is still amazingly simple to use with a range of inbuilt icons for creating infographics

and a great selection of photos and layouts. Some of the elements do have a cost, but it is unlikely you will ever need to pay for anything.



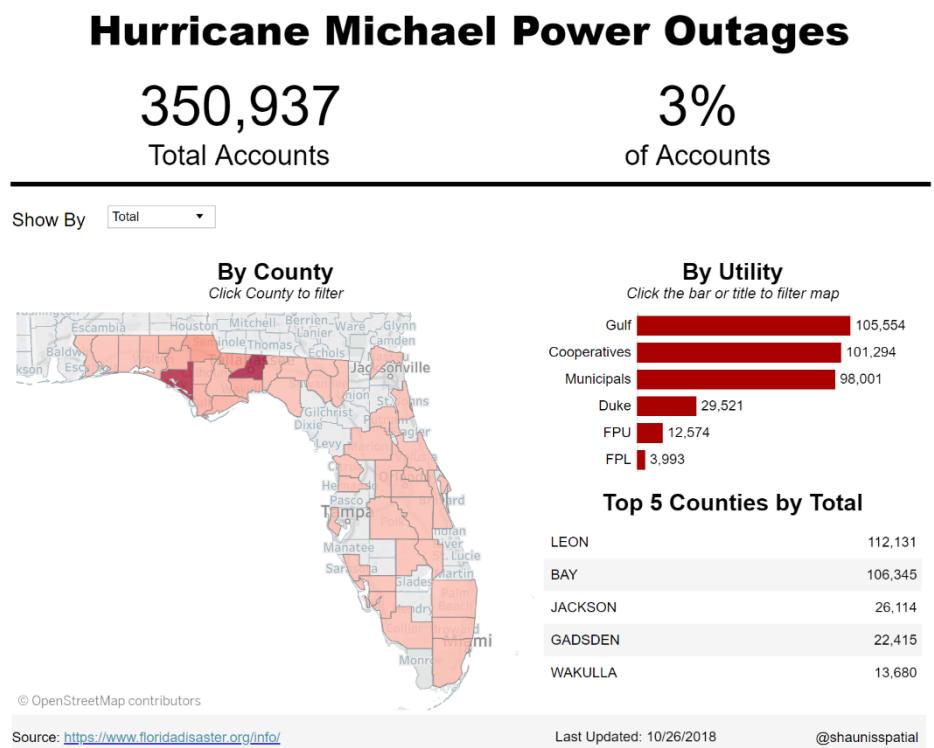
PEXELS <https://www.pexels.com/>

Free photos. Want a photo of two bananas in love, Pexels has you covered. On a slightly serious note getting good photos can be hard and Pexels offers thousands of copyright free photos for you to use. Obviously it is better to get your own pictures of the work you do, but there are times when you just need a high quality photo. A word of warning though, you may lose minutes or hours in here...



TABLEAU PUBLIC <https://public.tableau.com/en-us/s/>

So although Tableau is listed under design in this guide it is really a highly powerful data visualisation tool which has so much potential for charities. I will be doing a separate piece on data tools, but the reason it is listed here is that it can make boring data into amazingly useful graphics. It can be used for creating interesting financial or impact reports for board meetings or funders, but using geospatial data is where it really excels. Using inbuilt Geo coding it can turn postcodes and other data into interactive maps. Be aware that the free version of this does mean that everything you create becomes public, but it is a great way to experiment with making data more useful and more interesting.



Communications



HEMMINGWAY <http://www.hemingwayapp.com/>

"We are all apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master"

No this app won't make you into Hemmingway overnight, however it can be really useful to pop the text you have just written into the online version of the app and see what it highlights. Hemmingwayapp points out excessive use of adverbs, overly complex sentences and difficult to read sentences. It isn't perfect, and doesn't do well with acronyms....but maybe that is a good thing!

Feedback | Help

Desktop App

Just Released! Version 3.0!

Like 65K | Tweet

Bold Italic H1 H2 H3 Quote Bullets Numbers Link

Hemingway App makes your writing bold and clear.

The app highlights lengthy, complex sentences and common errors; if you see a yellow sentence, shorten or split it. If you see a red highlight, your sentence is so dense and complicated that your readers will get lost trying to follow its meandering, splitting logic — try editing this sentence to remove the red.

You can **utilize** a shorter word in place of a purple one. Mouse over them for hints.

Adverbs and weakening phrases are **helpfully** shown in blue. Get rid of them and pick words with force, **perhaps**.

Phrases in green have **been marked** to show passive voice.

You can **format** your *text* with the toolbar.

Paste in something you're working on and edit away. Or, click the Write button and compose something new.

Write Edit

Hemingway Editor

Readability

Grade 6 Good

Words: 133 Show More ▾

2 adverbs, meeting the goal of 2 or fewer.

1 use of passive voice, meeting the goal of 2 or fewer.

1 phrase has a simpler alternative.

1 of 11 sentences is hard to read.

1 of 11 sentences is very hard to read.

LIGHTFUL <https://www.lightful.com/>

The Lightful Platform is social media management platform specifically designed for good causes. It has much of the features you would expect from a social media platform such as post scheduling across multiple platforms, but Lightful goes much further. It offers a variety of images (300,000+ copyright-free, high-res images) for use in your posts, allows multiple users to collaborate on your social media channels, and it has templates that allow you to build compelling stories for your audiences.



ANCHOR <https://anchor.fm/>

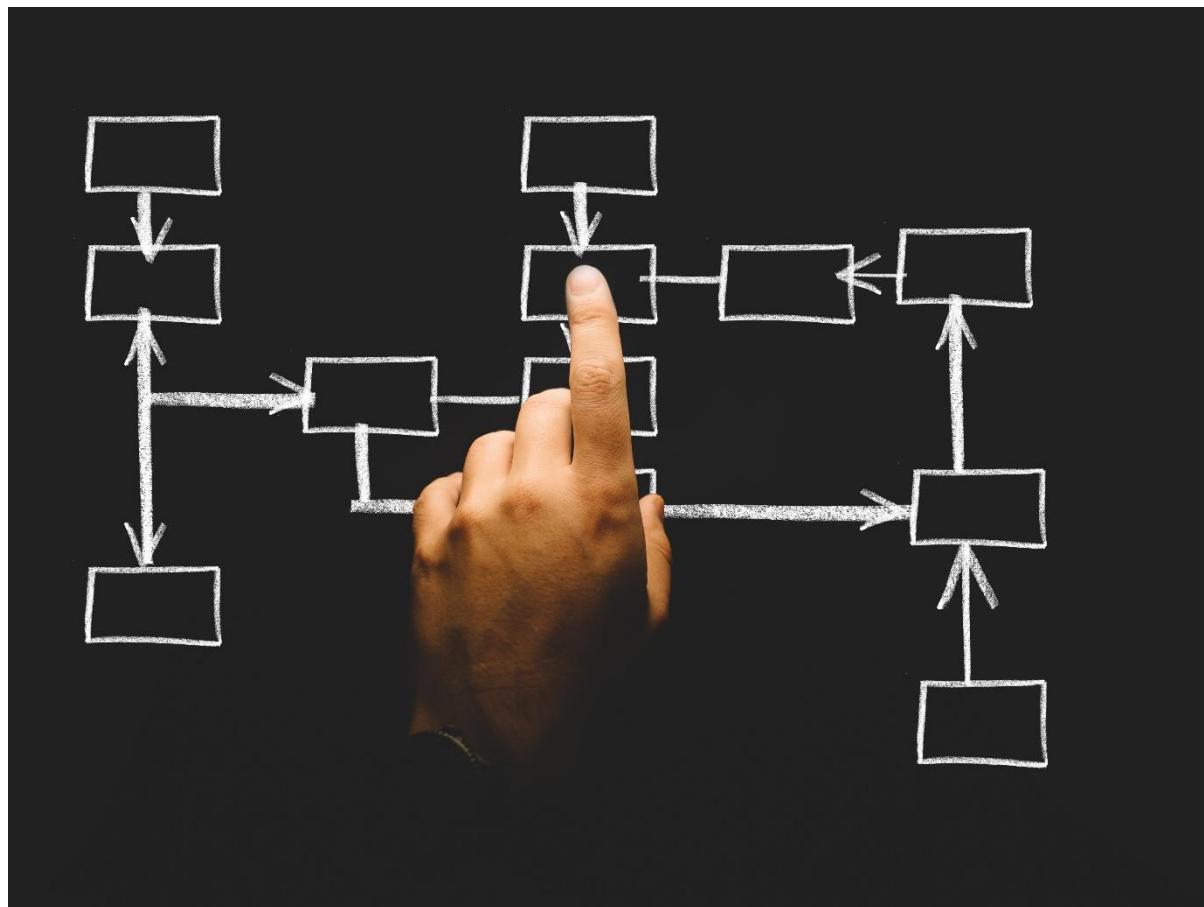
If you want to create a Podcast but have no idea how to begin well Anchor is a great place to start. It is a free platform and app that allows you to create podcast episodes with multiple people anywhere. You can edit in the app, upload to various channels, add transitions, transcribe into video and more. It is really easy to use, but detailed enough for all but the most advanced podcasters to use, and it's free!



HEADLINER APP <https://www.headliner.app/>

Headliner App allows you to make captioned videos or audiograms with a few clicks of a mouse. Using moving images can be a really good way to engage with a new audience and get noticed on social media. Headliner is extremely powerful and so simple to use. It works best on desktop or laptop computer, but you can create an audiogram in 5 minutes and yes, it's free. See a very rough example here https://media.sparemin.com/embed-video/videos/ed/63/a0/38/ed63a038-0780-4a64-bbf7-cc384af1cc13_153983.mp4

Operations



BREATHE HR <https://www.breathehr.com/>

If you are still recording staff leave, sickness and performance management on a spreadsheet, stop, and start using Breathe HR. It's free for charities and allows you to set profiles for each staff member, manage and approve leave, and importantly is gives you instant GDPR compliance for sensitive staff data.

SEJDA <https://www.sejda.com/>

Hands up who finds working with PDF's a nightmare? Unless you have Adobe Acrobat Pro (which isn't free) it is nearly impossible to edit PDF documents. Of course part of the point of PDF's is so that they can't be edited, but what about if you've created a form and just spot a small error and you've deleted the original? Or what if you need to fill in and return a form such as Small Business Rates Relief, which only comes in a PDF and otherwise you need to print and post it? Well the snappily title Sejda is here to help. An online tool to help you edit PDF's, Sejda is free so long as you take less than 3 hours per PDF, just upload, edit and download. Obviously you need to be aware of copyright issues!

TRELLO <https://trello.com/>

Trello is an online collaboration tool which helps people to work on projects together wherever they are. It allows you to break a project down into tasks, assign those tasks to people and set deadlines, really handy if you have a remote team or just people that work at different times of the day. It also allows you to upload documents and make comments so you can share ideas as you work. There are lots of these tools around, but Trello is very simple and the free version is more than enough for most small charities.

All-in-one



OFFICE 365 <https://products.office.com/en-gb/nonprofit/office-365-nonprofit-plans-and-pricing?tab=1>

Office 365 is free for registered charities and offers an amazing array of tools. The licence allows you to use Sharepoint, which in its simplest term can replace a server, allowing access to documents anywhere at any time. Allowing you to go cloud based with Sharepoint is just the start of the possibilities for new ways of working. Microsoft teams is a great way for reducing emails and increasing openness and collaboration across teams and departments. One note allows for online note taking and sharing. Planner allows for assigning tasks and setting deadlines. One underused app is Sway, which can turn boring PowerPoints or documents into online web stories easily. [In fact here is an example of how it can be used.](#)

G SUITE <https://www.google.com/nonprofits/products/apps-for-nonprofits.html>

An alternative to Office 365 is Google G Suite, again free for charities, offering similar capabilities for collaboration, openness and increase productivity. Google drive allows you to go cloud based, google docs has you covered for document editing, and google forms is great for gathering information, creating order forms or for quick surveys. It would take some time to make full Office 365 Versus G Suite comparisons, but both offer a huge amount of tools for free to charities. Some of this comes down to personal preference, but Google G suite does make collaborating outside of your organisation a little easier.