

## What is the Hub?

The CIVITAS Exchange Hub is an online collaboration platform that has been built to facilitate the work of the many diverse groups working under the CIVITAS umbrella.

The functions of the Exchange Hub are best suited for focused work among a small to medium-sized group of people over a limited timeframe with a clear goal or output.

However, the Hub can also be used by larger groups on a less intensive basis, initially serving to store files and make group members aware of important updates. The other functions of the Hub can be used as a group becomes more active in this online space.

## Who can use the Hub?

Any group within the CIVITAS community can make use of the Hub. The Hub allows private groups the ability to discuss, share files, and organise and report on progress on tasks.

The Hub can flexibly accommodate groups with varying sizes and purposes. The following shows how groups might vary within the first 'best' use of the Hub:

- A limited timeframe could be as little as a few weeks or months, or as long as several years
- The size of the group could range between 5 – 25 people
- An output can be a document or a publication, but could also encompass preparation for an event or a measurable goal

However, as mentioned previously, the Hub can also cater for larger groups as a storage and notification system, and other functions can be used as the group's needs develop.

## What are the functions?

**News:** short news items can be posted, which can include text, images, and attached files. This can be used to send important updates to everyone in a group immediately.

**Calendars:** events can be created in calendars including text, images, files, and Google maps. Events can also be copied to the main Hub calendar if appropriate.

**Discussions:** users can post and reply to discussions. Text, images, and files can be included in discussion posts and replies.

**File storage:** files can be uploaded into folders. Text can be included explaining the context of the files.

**Task list:** tasks can be created and assigned a status and priority. Users can be added to tasks and can discuss them by posting replies. Text, images, and files can be included.

**Notifications:** whenever content is added or edited on the Hub, the creator or editor can send notifications by email to colleagues or collaborators. They can choose to send notifications to the whole group, to selected individuals, or not at all.

**Linking:** any piece of content can be linked to others. This avoids needing to switch between different systems or tools. Some examples follow:

- The first post of a discussion thread could link to an upcoming event where the agenda is available, and encourage discussion on participation and contribution.
- A task could link to a file and ask every user to download the original and upload a revised version, and ask them to post a confirmation that they have done so.

Content can also be cloned between different spaces. For example, once the final draft version of a document is prepared by a sub-group of users in a small working space, it can be shared with a larger group for feedback.

## Examples of use

The following are brief examples of how the Hub could be used for a variety of purposes:

- Preparing a document or publication: A working space can be set up allowing a group to collect sources and materials for writing a document or a publication in one place, discuss the material and ideas, assign tasks and track progress towards publishing a final version.
- Event planning: A working space can be set up between the event host and organisers. This can be used to track and discuss logistical matters such as equipment and catering, contributions and programme details, dissemination, and reporting after the event has taken place.
- Measuring progress on a goal: If a group is set up for a longer time and is working consistently together on the same topic, the Hub can be used as a central working space for their activities and to increase the efficiency and quality of their work.

This might be done by quickly sharing resources or ideas for discussion, keeping important dates for meetings or other events in the space's calendar, and assigning and keeping track of tasks.

## How can I begin to use the Hub for my work?

To begin using the Hub, contact the Hub Administrator via [civitas-exchange-hub@iclei.org](mailto:civitas-exchange-hub@iclei.org) with information on how you would like to use it and what functions should be included in your new working space. The Administrator will create your space and accounts for your partners, notify them that they can login and begin posting, and give you support in making your working space well-structured and user-friendly.