



# CASE

ÁRAMLAT  
ALAPÍTVÁNY

“Dealing out the News:  
A Public-Figures Card  
Game to Engage the  
Community

# STUDY

## IN SHORT

Áramlat Alapítvány, publisher of KecsUP.hu, created KecsUP Kártya — a local-news-themed card game featuring public figures to fact-checked stories and curated articles. The game turns news into an interactive, shareable experience — resonating with younger audiences and strengthening community engagement around independent journalism.

## ABOUT THE NEWS OUTLET

Áramlat Alapítvány is a grassroots nonprofit organization founded in 2020 in Kecskemét, Hungary. It emerged as a civic response to the lack of pluralistic media in a region of 500,000 people, where independent press had all but disappeared under growing state control. The foundation runs KecsUP.hu, an independent rural media initiative that emphasizes not only reading the news but also understanding it in context. As of 2025, KecsUP has become the most influential independent online news service in central Hungary, co-founding collaborative platforms such as Szabadhírek.hu and partnering with outlets including Magyar Hang and Radio Free Europe.



## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Áramlat Alapítvány aimed to engage younger and less-reached audiences with local public affairs by turning journalism into a playful, shareable experience, while also strengthening community ties and creating a tangible product that could support branding, membership building, and offline engagement.



## IMPLEMENTED SOLUTIONS

The team developed KecsUP Kártya, a card game featuring local public figures linked via QR codes to fact-checked articles and curated reporting. They involved the community in selecting figures, tested gameplay through internal prototyping, and ensured the product was visually appealing and easy to use.

## WHY THIS PROJECT?

Áramlat Alapítvány chose this project because it has long been looking for new ways to spark interest in local public life — especially among younger audiences — in a playful and easily accessible format. KecUP's mission is to bring people closer to the key issues and personalities of Kecskemét, and the card game is both informative and entertaining, while also serving as a great conversation starter.

Additionally, Áramlat Alapítvány saw the project as a strong branding and community-building tool. The card deck is a unique printed product that represents KecUP's spirit in a tangible way and works well as a merchandise gift for our supporters. It also enables Áramlat Alapítvány to host its own KecUP Quiz Nights, which offer new opportunities for face-to-face community engagement and playful interaction with our journalistic content.

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## HOW DID APPLYING DESIGN THINKING PRINCIPLES HELP?

Design thinking was central to the process. The team prioritized user-centered design, ensuring the game was visually appealing, intuitive, and easy to play. They incorporated community input in selecting the 16 public figures featured in the deck, blending local politics, culture, activism, and journalism. Internal prototyping and testing rounds refined both the gameplay and how journalistic content was integrated — through QR codes and short links that connected each card to fact-checked stories and curated articles.

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## DID ÁRAMLAT ALAPÍTVÁNY'S APPROACH CHANGE ENGAGEMENT WITH ITS AUDIENCE IN ANY WAY?

The project helped build new relationships between Áramlat Alapítvány and its audience. Several people who had not previously followed its work discovered its content through the card game. For many, it was their first time encountering KecUP as a local media outlet. Through the QR codes on each card, players are directed to curated articles — this has increased both the time spent on Áramlat Alapítvány's website and the depth of engagement.

At our KecUP Quiz Nights, Áramlat Alapítvány was also able to engage people who had never read its content before. These events created new personal connections and helped expand Áramlat Alapítvány's active local community.

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## WHAT CHALLENGES DID ÁRAMLAT ALAPÍTVÁNY ENCOUNTER AND HOW DID IT ADDRESS THEM?

Unexpected illness among team members reduced capacity during critical phases, creating delays. The team responded by redistributing tasks, adjusting timelines, and focusing on key milestones. Another challenge was managing the project's many moving parts — from design and fact-checking to printing and distribution — within a tight time frame. The lesson learned was the importance of building flexibility and buffer time into project planning, particularly for small teams.

## HOW WAS ÁRAMLAT ALAPÍTVÁNY'S PROJECT RECEIVED BY ITS AUDIENCE?

The project attracted strong interest from its audience even during the planning phase. Áramlat Alapítvány shared visual previews and concept teasers of the card game, which were met with enthusiastic feedback and growing anticipation. Many followers expressed a desire to get their own copy, and some even suggested new public figures to include in future editions, as well as new topics for upcoming quiz nights. This early, active feedback confirmed that the card-game format resonated with Áramlat Alapítvány's community and filled a real need for playful, accessible engagement with public affairs. The strong anticipation alone has already boosted KecUP's visibility and fostered a more personal connection with its readers.

## WHAT INSIGHTS OR LESSONS DID ÁRAMLAT ALAPÍTVÁNY GAIN FROM THIS PROJECT?

One key lesson was that the audience could have been involved even earlier in the process, during the idea-development phase. The strong interest and active feedback Áramlat Alapítvány received later confirmed that its community is eager not only to consume content, but also to help shape it.

Áramlat Alapítvány also learned that producing a physical product — especially one that involves printing and packaging — is quite different from its usual work with digital formats like our news portal, podcasts, and videos, and requires a different level of planning and flexibility.

## WHAT DOES ÁRAMLAT ALAPÍTVÁNY PLAN ON DOING NEXT?

The KecUP Kártya project is seen as a foundation for further initiatives. Online engagement will be enhanced through a planned quiz game linked to the deck, while expansion packs featuring new public figures are being considered. The project also supports KecUP's broader goal of developing a membership model, with the card game serving as both a conversation starter and a bridge between media and community.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD ÁRAMLAT ALAPÍTVÁNY GIVE TO OTHER JOURNALISTS OR ORGANISATIONS CONSIDERING A SIMILAR PATH?

Be bold and experiment! A creative, playful project — like a card game, quiz night, or any offline format — can be a powerful way to engage with audiences, especially for smaller local newsrooms. The key is to keep the concept simple and closely tied to your existing content and mission. That said, producing a physical product almost always brings unexpected challenges — especially for teams used to digital publishing. It's important to plan carefully and stay flexible throughout.

Most importantly, Áramlat Alapítvány strongly recommends involving the local community as early as possible. Even if the final product doesn't materialize, the collaborative brainstorming process itself becomes a kind of social product — building engagement, ownership, and excitement. The long-term impact on audience loyalty and community connection can be remarkable.



VISUALS FROM THE PROJECT

