

LSIS Leadership in Technology (LIT) grant based intervention

Case study template

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<p>LIT Project title</p>	<p>Virtual World Champions</p>
<p>Project summary :</p> <p>- Include the particular area for improvement that has been tackled through the effective deployment of technology</p>	<p>This project looked to build on A4e's initial scoping of real-time 3D internet as a teaching & learning tool by consulting trainers and learners in its national Vox Centres. Aided by a mentor, the staff were to consider the benefits of using the technology alongside their current resources and identify an area of practice which the tool could improve.</p> <p>The ideas gathered from the staff were translated into a methodology that developers at Teesside University's d lab could interpret and build a test area for the improved induction and assessment of Vox Centre learners.</p>
<p>What were the aims of the project?</p>	<p>The project aimed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve both the communication and join-up of otherwise isolated centres and their staff; • provide a more consistent experience for learners; • focus on how emerging technologies could be integrated into A4e's work with young people; • develop the confidence of our trainers in using technology as a teaching & learning tool.
<p>What did you do and how did you do this?</p>	<p>The project's key activities were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • initial promotion of the scheme through signing up the Vox national manager, regular bulletins and individual discussions; • the recruitment of a champion to represent each centre; • a mixture of live, telephone and e-mail consultation and

<p>What role did your mentor play on your LIT project?</p> <p>What have been the key benefits from the input of your mentor?</p> <p>What was the benefit of the support that you received from your LSIS Associate?</p>	<p>training to encourage ideas and generate a trial activity;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • studio time to create a bespoke induction and assessment resource via Teesside University's d lab technicians. <p>The project's mentor was Lesley Renwick. Lesley has been constantly involved, offering guidance, support and specific interventions to increase the value and impact of this project.</p> <p>Her main contribution has been to lead two tailored training sessions to consider how this new technology can be utilised as an effective teaching and learning tool. The sessions covered Experiential learning and Differentiation, two key factors for success in our Vox Centres bearing in mind the cohort's varying needs and abilities. Following this training, Lesley has committed to ongoing professional dialogue so as to continue to support centre champions as they get to grips with the new resource.</p> <p>Lesley has brought credibility to the CPD aspect of the project and ensured that it is an initiative that will be sustained within our practice. If it was merely a timebound internal activity it may have floundered and lost momentum, but Lesley's involvement has ramped it up in people's minds to show how the topics covered can have a positive effect on all aspects of their practice. This is borne out by the good attendance on the online training and the positive comments made during and after the sessions.</p> <p>Our LSIS associate was Tim Kelly. Again, Tim's involvement has been invaluable as we have progressed through the various stages of the scheme. Upon submission of the original action plan, Tim made sure that we focussed on the change elements of the project to lift it up from simply being a short-term intervention. He helped us to see the impact it could have on each individual involved and the wider consequences of doing it in terms of personal and professional development.</p> <p>Tim also brought us the 'aerial view' from his portfolio of current projects and vast experience of managing such programmes. This helped us get a realistic picture of what was achievable and also posed some important 'what if / why not' questions that we otherwise would not have considered.</p>
<p>What has been the impact and benefit of the LIT capital grant to your project?</p>	<p>Alongside the mentor / associate input the capital grant has probably been the most important aspect of this scheme.</p> <p>The use of emerging technologies will raise both suspicion and fear in any organisation, but this is multiplied in one the size and shape of A4e. If we were to simply drop the</p>

<p>What did the project cost, including LSIS funding?</p>	<p>technology onto colleagues in different locations and ask them to get on with it the whole thing is likely to fail. Instead, by securing equipment that can enable us to demonstrate the capabilities of the tool either at our Stockton / Sheffield headquarters or out in the field we stand a much better chance of winning hearts and minds and sustaining the LIT project.</p> <p>The equipment we have purchased also allows us to showcase the virtual world via large screens within Vox Centres, which will also help us to stand out as a training provider and be a more attractive proposition to young people.</p> <p>As per our original allocation, the revenue grant enabled us to secure a mentor, offer backfill incentives to the Vox Centres in return for the champions' time and create a trail area through Teesside University. This totalled £6,000. On top of this and the near £5,000 we spent on capital equipment we estimate that a further £10,000 has been spent on A4e central staff time to drive the project, produce notes, presentations and reports, attend meetings and events, liaise with Teesside University and generally promote the project internally and across the sector. This project has taken up significant time for Carly Barker and Michael Glenn that was not factored in to their original work programme but has enabled it to arrive at its successful conclusion. The figure also includes a number of call-outs for A4e technicians to install / update the software and provide remote technical support.</p> <p>This creates a total project cost of £21,000.</p>
<p>What has been the impact of your LIT project on your organisational improvement strategy?</p> <p>What were the benefits of your LIT project?</p>	<p>The LIT project has enabled us to take a structured approach to implementing a project and align it to overall organisational improvement. The improvement will come not simply through the adoption of a new piece of technology, but through the more effective ways of communicating, consulting and involving wider colleagues in new activity. For too long development and operations have worked as separate entities but this scheme has shown how joining together from the outset leads to better results.</p> <p>The exemplary records, clerking and filing from this project will also be used as best practice across the division as a lesson in how to organise and retain evidence required against an action plan and the expectations of funders.</p> <p>The benefits of this project have been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to expertise, events, training and resources to improve our practice; • The time and space to develop an idea and link it to

<p>What were the savings to your organisation?</p> <p>How did you calculate them?</p>	<p>firm outcomes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater linkages between development and operations and better communication between Vox Centres; • Improved understanding of the virtual world technology and a new resource to trial with learners; • Better understanding of action planning and change processes; • Generation of evidence to gain further support for embedding technology across the business; • Acquisition of equipment to create a dedicated demo and showcase function. <p>In addition to this we have enjoyed a real boost for our morale as a team. Too often the VWCs are bogged down with operational issues but this project has given them a chance to be creative, develop ideas and think outside of the box.</p> <p>The activity ideas they generated through the mentor training exercise were stimulating and exciting, linking the bits that they needed to cover through the course requirements with a fun and innovative approach to framing the work.</p> <p>Whilst there was not enough time or resource to develop all of the ideas, A4e is committed to finding further funding to make sure that the impetus created is built upon and nurtured and we can retain this emerging 'gang mentality' to continue to improve our practice.</p> <p>As this project was a labour-intensive R&D exercise it is difficult to calculate the savings to the organisation in the short term. As described above, a conservative estimate of A4e time into this scheme is £10,000. However, there are a number of efficient areas rolling out this technology will create in the long term:</p> <p>Staff travel and time – by using the virtual world to deliver CPD we will cut out the need for staff to come together from their various centres as often as they currently do. Based on mileage claims and a flat hourly rate of £20 per manager the saving for one live meeting of 4 hours in Sheffield and an average travel time of 3 hours per person and claim of 150 miles per person @ 40p per mile x 10 people the saving of just one meeting would be £2,000.</p> <p>Learner assessment – by transferring some of the evidence for qualifications online we believe we could sustain our current staffing for assessing should two members of frontline staff leave. This equates to a salary saving of £44,000 per year.</p>
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<p>What were the lessons learned?</p> <p>What tips do you have for other providers?</p>	<p>Although the project can be deemed a success and we have achieved our key outcomes there are inevitably things that we could have done better. The main lessons learned from this exercise are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Involve more people</u> – instead of trying to save people additional work and time by working through a small team, in order to get full buy-in and secure swift support when problems arise it would have been better to put a cross-divisional working party together from the start. The main omission was someone from the IT technical team as they needed to be brought up to speed with the system requirements etc and did not feel engaged thus were more reluctant to prioritise the installation etc; • <u>Understanding the techie stuff</u> – as the resource has been developed in partnership with Teesside University we have had to take a lot of information and advice on board in terms of minimum specifications for machines, broadband speeds, firewall instructions etc. This flow of communication and aforementioned omission of an IT technician from the main project team, meant that precious time was lost that could have been spent testing and feeding back on the product; • <u>State the obvious</u> – the key theme for this LSIS project was to educate volunteers from our Vox Centres to become ‘virtual world champions’ so that the development of our 3D internet programmes would reflect the needs and priorities of our frontline staff and learners. Having been immersed in the planning for this for some time, the main project team may have been guilty of inadvertently using jargon and advanced thinking during meetings and consultation exercises, with some staff feeling a little left behind. The training and mentor support has been able to remedy this, but it should be captured so that other providers do not fall in

<p>How will you disseminate effective practice to others in the sector?</p>	<p>to a similar trap!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Think corporately to improve sustainability</u> – the project team are perfectly happy that the benefits of this project are clear for all to see in terms of teaching & learning, integration of staff teams and organisations change. However, these are not the measures that our company’s management board will accept as evidence of future investment. If we are to sustain this project, and build on the good work that we have done so far, we need to consider what currency our organisation needs in order to back us. In reality this will be cost efficiencies, revenue generation and improved customer outcomes, thus we have a battle on our hands to achieve this over the coming weeks. <p>We are keen to see that this project is extended in terms of time and scope. Our dream is to create a multi-agency hub where FE, WBL and IAG partners all collaborate to produce a stimulating environment for learning and development. We are already proactively pursuing this through meetings and demonstrations with a number of providers and have been met with a positive response. In terms of further disseminating the results of our project and the support we have received from LSIS we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide further case studies, reports and testimonials as required; • Reference the project at events and conferences; • Produce demo films and access links for sector partners to view the work; • Collate any internal and external publicity about the project and make available to LSIS.
<p>Provide a quote on your experience of the LSIS LIT project.</p> <p>Are you happy for us to use this and your contact details for marketing and</p>	<p>The LSIS project has offered a great blend of expertise, focussed training activity and resource to ensure that we have made clear progress within the organisation. As much as the grant has enabled us to deliver a specific technology scheme we have equally benefited from clear guidance as to how an effective project should be planned, shaped, delivered and monitored which will have great bearing on our work going forward.</p> <p>Yes</p>

publications?	
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