Regional Collaboration Fund (RCF) grant based intervention Impact study template

RCF Project title	Pennine Lancashire Governors Portal
Name of lead contact	Blackburn College
Consortium members	Burnley College Nelson and Colne College
Other contributing organisations (if any)	Not applicable.

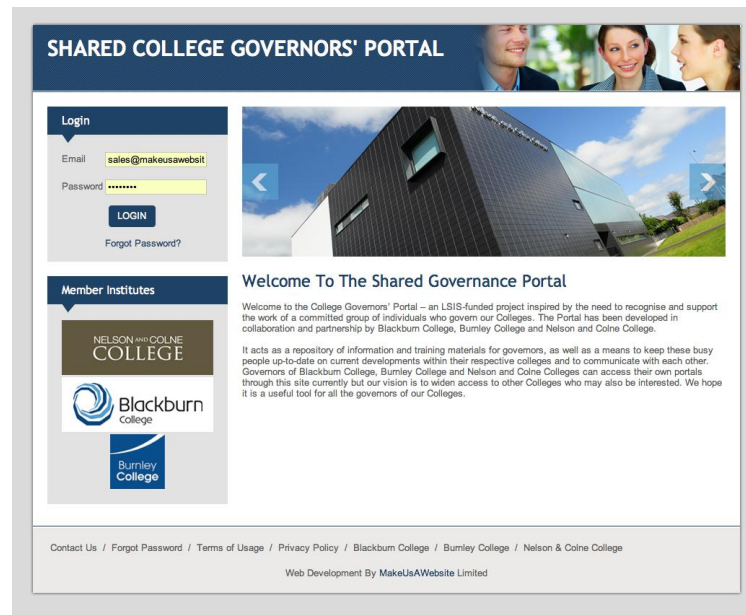| The project	
What problem or issue you were trying to resolve or improve with this project	The aim of this project was to improve communication and sharing of best practice and information between College Governors within their respective colleges and across Pennine Lancashire. As key individuals for College Governance it is important that they understand their learners and the technology they use in order to inform policy, strategy and new College developments. Each college is subject to robust governance and performance management. Therefore, there is a great deal of commonality between the colleges. Given the current economic climate, there is an agreement to respond collectively to regional strategies e.g. Multi Area Agreement and PLACE. This project will enable Governors to share common information and resources such as: • legislative issues, • tendering/funding opportunities, • regional strategy, • training opportunities and e-learning courses, • shared good practice and resources (economic efficiencies) In addition the project will have a significant positive impact on the colleges (individually and collectively) and the wider FE sector, supporting a collaborative approach to regional requirements and facilitate the exploration of further joint opportunities.

| What was your solution | This project created a Pennine Lancashire Governors Portal which enables individual Governors to receive news and information regarding their own College's Governance. The Portal also allows Governors to exchange and share information with their counterparts in Colleges across Pennine Lancashire.

The Portal allows Governors to login to their own profile page in order to view key documents such as minutes, find out the latest news and events from their Colleges and share sector information with their counterparts across Pennine Lancashire.

A selected group of Governors from each participating College were given IPads/tablets in order to promote e-learning, facilitate paperless meetings and trial the Portal. The Portal should be available to access anywhere, any time.

It is anticipated the Portal will be made available to the other Lancashire Colleges in order to facilitate further collaboration and shared best practice.

Screen Shot of Governance Portal Home Page |
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Screen Shot of Profile Page

Screen Shot of Documents Page
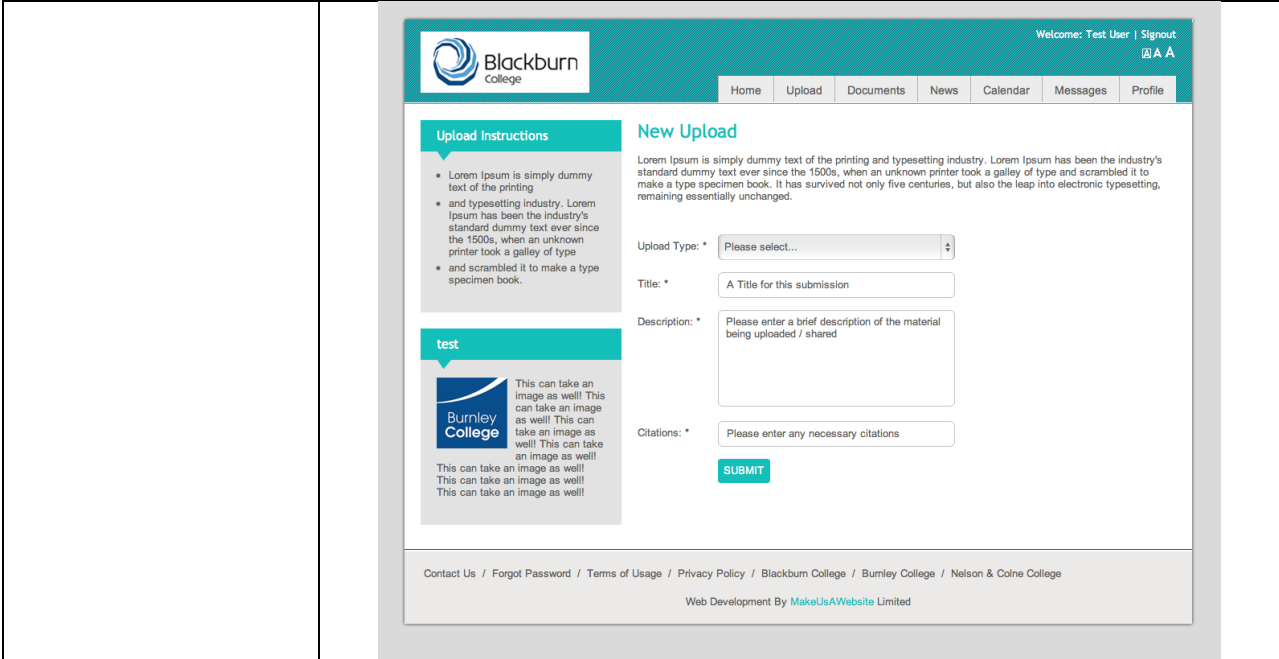
Screen Shot of Upload Page

Describe what you did and what happened	• A project working group was established with representatives from each partner College – Blackburn, Burnley and Nelson and Colne. It was important that this Group consisted of individuals whose job roles are key stakeholders for the Portal e.g. a Staff Governor, Senior College Management, Staff Members, and Clerk to the Corporation Board. As lead college, it was agreed that Blackburn College's UK Projects/Bid Co-ordinator would monitor and co-ordinate the project on behalf of the consortium.
	• Regular project meetings were held to discuss the design specifications of the Portal in relation to each stakeholder. Each stakeholder identified their needs from the Portal and this was conveyed in the brief to the web developer. Each College took into consideration the abilities and needs of their Governors as well as what information could be shared, what would be specific to their own Colleges and how and by whom the Portal would be updated. The design was informed by 'live' workshop type meetings where the group could use the Portal and comment.
	• There were mixed reactions from Governors across the 3 colleges on the proposed Portal. The Blackburn Chair was particularly supportive to the change but some individuals were cautious of the idea due to their technological expertise. These individuals were particularly important to the project as

	their input and feedback was valuable in order to ensure that the Portal is easy to use and can be used by individuals with a range of expertise. The feedback gained through the stakeholder trial of the Portal was important and enabled them to provide comments first hand. At Nelson and Colne College, Governors welcomed the idea of the Governor's Portal. However it was recognised in the early stages of the project that time for Governors to learn how to access this and have ILT support to enable them to use the portal would be potential barriers.
	• A Web Developer was appointed to create the Portal over a period of 3 months.
	• A joint meeting of the College's Clerks to the Corporation Board was held to facilitate discussion on collaborative working and the features of the Portal. The Portal makes a difference to the Clerks way of working and it was important to discuss co-ordination regarding updating the Portal with sector information. The Clerks were positive about the Portal and gave encouraging feedback in relation to the value it would give to their roles and the efficiencies and improved communication it will provide both within their own College and across the other colleges. One of the main contributors from Nelson and Colne College was the Clerk to the Board and this was useful because she was able to provide a useful insight into the Clerk's role which helped inform the design stage of the project.
	• A demonstration was held with all representatives to finalise the Portals appearance and capabilities.
	• Each college was given 3 IPads or tablets (depending on their preference) to trial the Portal amongst its Governors and feedback to improve the functionality of the Portal. The Governors were chosen to reflect a mix of ICT abilities in particular a number of Governors who were initially cautious of the idea were keen to try the Portal. Staff development was provided to support them in the use of new technology.
The collaboration	
How well did the collaboration work and what were the key factors that led to this	Each college is subject to robust governance and performance management which means that there is a great deal of commonality between the colleges. In addition given the current economic climate, there is an agreement to respond collectively to regional strategies e.g. Multi Area Agreement, PLACE and the

	Lancashire Enterprise Partnership. Therefore it seemed logical that the College's should collaborate to share best practice and expertise amongst the Governors. This project has enabled 3 Pennine Lancashire colleges to work together to create a mutually beneficial resource. The Colleges may ordinarily regard each other as competitors therefore a collaboration at Senior management level would not be the norm. The scope for commonality and a shared goal meant that this was never an issue. All members of the Project team have been committed to the development of the Portal and have commented on how the collaboration has been beneficial to their college. The Portal will improve communication between College Governors to support one another in their roles. The collaboration is a new way of working for all colleges involved particularly at this senior level and the project has facilitated new partnerships and contacts within the colleges. The Colleges are keen to investigate further opportunities for collaboration. One suggestion has been training sessions which are applicable to all colleges which could be shared therefore increasing the cost effectiveness of delivery. Some College Governors have expressed concern at sharing and hosting information external to their College. Mechanisms such as security certificates have reassured them and they appreciate the mitigation of risk for sensitive information that an external host provides. This again improves efficiency by reducing the need to communicate and collaborate with 3 IT departments. However IT departments have been consulted in the first instance to ensure no data is compromised. The Blackburn College Governors were particularly interested in the collaborative element to the Portal – getting contacts and sharing ideas and items with other Governors. They were particularly supportive of widening the project to include other colleges locally, regionally and nationally.
The benefits and impact of the project	
What benefits/ impact has the project had on:::	a. the work/ effectiveness of the organisations in your consortium Prior to this project each College had its own way of sharing information with its Governors and updating them with College news. Blackburn College sends out all documentation for meetings in hard copy or via email. It also has a Governors information section on the website but this is more for sharing

Governance information with external stakeholders. Burnley College had an intranet site which wasn't used by all Governors. Nelson and Colne College…

There was no mechanism which enabled colleges Governors to share information and expertise or pool resources. The Governance Portal will enable all partners signed up to the system to do just that and improve communication amongst their own colleagues and strengthen the sector as a whole.

Blackburn College
So far the Portal has been trialled with a group of key stakeholders – Clerks, Governors, staff members. They have reported that it will improve the way in which Governors communicate and access information. It is anticipated that the Portal will be more widely available in the next few weeks as we upload key information ready for its launch. We felt that it was important to feedback information after the trial prior to launch. We are however realistic in that we know there will be further improvements to be made as the Portal is more widely used.

It is hoped that the Portal may lead to paperless Governance meetings and the increased use of Technology within meetings.

The Portal will be updated by a number of people, each responsible for the own sections, this will ensure the site is update to date and is not an onerous task for one person. The Clerks will be responsible for their own College Governance documents in addition to a specific sector updates e.g. AoC. The College Marketing team will upload college events and news. Other college departments and Governors will be able to send news directly to their Clerk for uploading. Regular meetings will be held with partner colleges to monitor the Portals success and relevance.

The project has begun to raise awareness of the value of new technologies at a strategic level. Governors are beginning to appreciate and have a greater understanding of the technology which is being used by students at their colleges.

The project improved the realisation of opportunities to work together on common goals for shared benefit and efficiencies. For example, training courses and sharing of sector expertise.

Communication both informal and formal has increased through the provision of iPads to the pilot group of Governors. Two are

	now using the iPads frequently whilst the others are in the early development stages. Burnley College The development of the Portal was welcomed by Burnley College Governors as part of the College's efficiency drive towards becoming paper light. Governors were keen to follow the development of the Portal and remarked that to have a resourced developed for them was greatly appreciated as it was seen as a recognition of the contribution they make to the organisation. Dispelling concerns regarding the security of commercially sensitive documentation was a particular priority, and through liaison with the web developer and our Network Manager, any fears were allayed. Burnley College Governors will be embracing the Portal as a dynamic and readily available resource. Nelson and Colne College There have been specific benefits from collaborating on the project and this includes sharing good practice with the partner colleges on current arrangements on aspects of governance. Wider benefits include enabling a dialogue to begin on the use of ILT for all aspects of leadership and management in the College. The College has just undertaken an e-review of teaching learning and leadership and management in the College.
	b. the cost/ efficiency of activities The Portal enables Colleges to share information, resources and best practice for improved efficiencies. The Portal also facilitates shared training and e-learning on common themes and topics. The Portal will support paperless meetings and the use technology to improve communication and reduce travelling costs. In order to ensure the long term sustainability of the Portal it has been necessary to devise a funding agreement amongst the colleges. The cost implications for hosting and maintenance are

	minimal, particularly when shared across the partners. The Portal as shared resource will also facilitate future collaborations amongst the partners and other Pennine Lancashire colleges.
	c. any other aspect(s) of your work
What contribution to the success / smooth running of the project was made by:	LSIS funding - **essential** LSIS Associate - **a lot** Acting as a critical friend and pushing the Colleges' perceptions of collaboration. Other contributors External Web Developer and Host - **essential**
What did the project cost: LSIS funding + your consortium's contribution	£28,356.54 - LSIS grant £746.14 contributed from Blackburn College towards their iPads
What lessons did you learn / what tips would you give to other providers	This project has supported the collaboration between 3 Pennine Lancashire colleges, which is rare at Senior Management level. The project will open up additional opportunities for collaboration across the 3 partners as well as additional Pennine Lancashire colleges. In order to achieve this project it has been essential to have one lead college and a key point of contact who can co-ordinate activities to ensure timely completion against targets, outcomes and deadlines. A small group of key stakeholders (Staff Governor, Director of Resources and Clerk to the Corporation Board) were involved in the project. These stakeholders will be end users of the Portal, therefore their involvement ensured that the Portal was fit for purpose and engaged with its audience.
**Telling others**
What have you done to share	The Portal has been showcased at the LSIS Technology for Success Conference and was positively received.

/disseminate this project with others in the sector	It has also been raised at the Lancashire Colleges Consortium Funding Officers Group and will be demonstrated at the Lancashire Colleges Principals Group in order to showcase the benefits of the Portal and how other Colleges can join. The Portal will be promoted at every opportunity to widen its impact and reach. It has the potential to allow any College to join regardless of their location. It is proposed that in the long term the Portal may be membership based whereby each College contributes towards a setup fee and annual membership fee which covers annual hosting costs and ensures its future sustainability. Any interested Colleges will be invited to contact Blackburn College in the first instance.
Provide a quote on your experience of the LSIS RCF project.	This innovative project has provided 3 Pennine Lancashire colleges with an excellent collaborative opportunity to improve communication and share best practice between their Governors. The Governors Portal is a new vehicle in which Governors can share their experiences and information within their respective colleges and across Pennine Lancashire. The Portal will enable Governors to share common information and resources such as: • legislative issues, • tendering/funding opportunities, • regional strategy, • training opportunities and e-learning courses, • shared good practice and resources (economic efficiencies) In addition the project will have a significant positive impact on the colleges (individually and collectively) and the wider FE sector, supporting a collaborative approach to regional requirements and facilitate the exploration of further joint opportunities.
Are you happy for us to use this and your contact details	**Quote** **Yes** / No

for marketing and publications?	**Contact information**	**Yes**	/	No
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