

LSIS Leadership in Technology (LIT) grant based intervention Impact study template

Provider name & contact details	A4e Limited Michael Glenn 07739 953875
LIT Project title	Sector Snapshots
The project	
What problem or issue you were trying to resolve or improve with this project	<p>Much of A4e's programme delivery takes place in different venues across the country and trainers are expected to develop and adapt materials for their teaching groups. With this project we wanted to narrow the gap between the quality of experience our learners receive and create an enhanced team spirit amongst delivery staff.</p> <p>Building on previous development in this area, including a successful LIT project delivered in 2010-11, this project aimed to support the drive for improved quality, consistency and standardisation across the business by creating a resource to reflect the key employer expectations in three popular sectors – Health & Social Care, Retail and Hospitality & Catering.</p>
Why did you go for a technology-based solution	<p>The decision to use technology was made for three key reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was regarded as the most efficient way of producing a resource that could be used by different groups of learners across the business; • Work on Generator had identified a need to improve the technological capabilities of the staff team, comprising the LSIS project managers (working in development), frontline trainers and their immediate managers / supervisors; • Technology plays an increasing role in most workplaces hence we need to better prepare our customers for the transition through access to hardware and exposure to relevant programs. <p>More specifically, we chose to use Virtual World technology so that we could take full control over its content and functionality and so we could provide a fully immersive learner experience that helped to bridge the gap between learning and work by offering a visual and interactive simulation of the type of activities people would be doing in the workplace.</p>

	<p>The previous LIT project has provided encouraging feedback about the ability to navigate around the environment in a flexible and informal manner in order to retrieve information and the ability to access the resource via a simple web browser out of hours, thus it seemed to be the best decision to continue to develop a medium that we had a positive experience of and was meeting the needs of staff and learners.</p>
<p>What did the project cost: LSIS funding + your organisation's contribution</p>	<p>It is estimated that the project has cost in excess of £10,000, with staff time, travel, additional reviews and further interventions from the University supplementing the £6,000 LIT grant we received.</p>
<p>Describe what you did and what happened</p>	<p>Having previously delivered a LIT project, we were aware of the requirements and the benefits that the scheme can bring. Having a focused, action plan-driven project ensures that we consider not just the immediate impact of the programme, but think more broadly about how the development of technology can make a lasting difference to the company and the people we support.</p> <p>Our first job was to agree and action plan with our associate, noting the key activities that would help us to arrive at our key outcome – having a resource created in consultation with staff and learners that could be used to enhance their practice and provide greater consistency across delivery programmes. With this action plan in place, and the support of our mentor we set about considering how our bid could be brought to life with the help of virtual world technology.</p> <p>With an endorsement from our LSIS associate we approached Mike Gilkes from Teesside University to provide a sector expertise that we could not manage to secure from within FE / training. Mike has been involved in pioneering the use of virtual world technology over a period of 30 years and was able to bring an international best practice perspective to our work as he offered guidance and constructive support.</p> <p>The first stage was to work with the mentor to determine what was possible with the budget we had. This set us useful parameters, and ensured that we could manage the expectations of trainers and management in terms of what was achievable. From this, the project team worked up a sketch of what the sector zones should look like, providing a consistent set of features that would make liaising with sector leads and gathering information more straightforward.</p> <p>However, during the interim meeting with our associate some</p>

concerns were raised around the potential impact of three very 'thin' sector areas. It was felt that we would not be able to include either the care scenarios or quiz elements if we persisted with the three areas, which would mean that we would not get the most out of the interactive 3D aspect of the virtual world. As a result it was agreed that we would concentrate on just one sector, and make a better resource that could have a stronger impact. We selected Health & Social Care as the sector area and set about adapting the action plan to reflect this.

The next activity involved engaging two of our sector leads to support the collation and writing of information, and make sure that it linked to the accredited programmes learners are engaged on, including NCFE and City & Guilds Level 1 Introduction To Working In The Health & Social Care courses. The sector leads are frontline trainers responsible for developing and delivering activities to learners, and for providing internal verification for less experienced colleagues. As a pilot programme we did not expect that we would have pages of complicated content, rather some 'snapshots' around what it was like to work in that sector, as the project title suggests. We settled on five key areas as headings, and began to collect thoughts around:

- Definitions of different types of / locations for care;
- Quiz questions to test knowledge;
- General facts about the care industry;
- Case studies of clients to translate into scenarios;
- Key documents used by personnel working in care.

Once this has been collected, we met with the mentor to share our views and receive feedback on their suitability. Content was then handed over and the web developers set about creating a site map that we could look over and see how the environment might progress, allowing the project team to suggest and agree changes before it went into production. The relationship worked as a partnership, with both the mentor and developers offering ways that our ideas might be improved or made more effective. All instructions were put in writing however so as to ensure that there was a full audit trail should further clarification be required.

A demo version was created and formed the basis of a staff consultation session, where the sector leads could evaluate how far the environment matched up with their ideas and expectations, with those participating completing surveys so that we had some quantitative data to work with. Feedback was also gathered from learners, ensuring that we captured the views of all

the stakeholders prior to changes being made.

Things that our survey respondents wanted to see changed included:

Main Care Zone

'Lacks colour and character.'

Care Definitions

'Could have more information.'

Care Scenarios

'Needs instructions for navigation to make it easier to use.'

Care Library

'Library possibly isn't the right title to use as these forms would be useful on a daily basis. The information provided could be more in - depth.'

Positive mentions were made of the following features in the first version:

Main Care Zone

'Easy to see where you are and where you need to go to get information.'

Care Scenarios

'A good way to actually visualise certain scenarios.'

Comments and requests for additions / alterations were handed over at a meeting with the mentor, with some key decisions made about how the environment could be improved:

- General look and feel, including colour schemes, additional images and the company logo;
- Removal of the 'e-mail' function due to concerns as to who would pick up any queries;
- Replacement of the care definitions to focus instead on care settings;
- Changes to the care scenarios to ensure that all of the information is available to view before answers are

	<p>submitted.</p> <p>This led to the creation of a second version which was presented to the project team at the end of June. The differences were marked, with the site now much more user-friendly, attractive and detailed to allow trainers to energise the way they are delivering some of their courses' core modules.</p> <p>At the time of writing we are due to host both live and web-based training sessions for staff to become familiar with the site's functionality and ask any questions before they start to integrate the new resource into their regular delivery.</p>
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The benefits and impact

<p>What benefits/ impact has the project had on:::</p>	<p>a. the work/ effectiveness of your organisation</p> <p>The project has provided a range of positive benefits in terms of A4e's work and effectiveness, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater appreciation of the value of technology in improving teaching and learning amongst divisional managers; • Sharing of good practice via associate / sector partners through attendance at conferences, events and through meetings; • Improved understanding of the action planning process; • Closer relationships between key internal project stakeholders – development and operations; • Better knowledge of our customers' needs through consultation; • Stronger links with HE through the mentoring relationship.
	<p>b. the cost/ efficiency of activities</p> <p>This project has helped to confirm that using technology effectively can have an impact upon the division's finances. By frontloading the costs into the development of the site we have been able to ensure that we can compare our £3,000 investment with the relative costs normally incurred through staff meetings, travel, printed materials, visual aids etc. Most of these costs will be incurred on a regular basis, with any consumables needing to be replaced for each cohort of learners. However, the site that has been developed can be used year after year for no additional cost and staff can now take ownership of the resource so that updates and innovative ways of using / extending it can be shared via a web forum or through telephone conferencing.</p>

	<p>In terms of taking this work forward outside of the grant funding we now understand what increments of £500 will pay for (£500 being the day rate of the developers). This allows us to consider including further projects in our applications for funding, and for offering cost-effective solutions to the business when they are looking to implement new services or processes.</p> <p>One of the best aspects of this kind of technology is that as it is accessed via a web browser there is no need to apply licence / concurrent user costs, though these could potentially form part of a revenue generation strategy.</p> <p>The best route for taking this forward – also offering significant value for money – is for a number of partners to collaborate and build a community for different groups of learners. This means that for each individual contribution partners would have access to each other’s areas, thus returning huge benefits on their original investment.</p>				
	<p>c. any other aspect of your work</p> <p><u>Profile of division</u> – winning the contract and working with LSIS has allowed the Learning & Skills division to increase its profile both internally with senior management and within the sector.</p> <p><u>Customer experience</u> – the introduction of virtual world technology improves the learning activities and makes for more stimulating lessons to support the engagement and retention of customers. This is borne out by early survey responses and will be further proved once the resource is utilised fully by trainers.</p> <p><u>Improved teamwork</u> – the involvement of frontline training staff and sector specialists in all aspects of this project has forged stronger bonds between the development and operations functions of the division. This improved relationship will help with future bids and project implementation activities as each finds out and understands more about the work of the other. In the past, there has been a disconnect between both the work and ideals of the development and operations teams. By collaborating on this project and listening to the thoughts and priorities of the other it has ensured that the resources handed to frontline staff have their seal of approval and are fit for purpose.</p>				
<p>What contribution to the success / smooth running of</p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="488 1766 690 1816">LSIS funding</td> <td data-bbox="690 1766 1446 1816">a little / some/ a lot / <u>essential</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="488 1816 690 1879">Your mentor</td> <td data-bbox="690 1816 1446 1879">a little / some/ a lot / <u>essential</u></td> </tr> </table>	LSIS funding	a little / some/ a lot / <u>essential</u>	Your mentor	a little / some/ a lot / <u>essential</u>
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<p>the project was made by:</p>	<p>LSIS Associate a little / some/ a lot / <u>essential</u></p>
<p>Do you have any comments on the funding, mentor or LSIS Associate.</p>	<p>The model of having a mentor close to the project offering dedicated guidance and further support from a more detached, impartial associate provides the right level of challenge and assistance to the project. Both roles are vital to make the project manager accountable for their actions and ensure that the intended outcomes are achieved in line with the project's action plan. It also ensures that as an organisation we can learn from others both within and outside of the sector.</p> <p>The funding buys the time and space to look into an issue that although important wouldn't otherwise be a priority as part of the day job. This allows us to remain aware of how emerging technologies can benefit the business and highlights the main areas we need to develop / invest in order to remain a credible provider.</p>
<p>What lessons did you learn / what tips would you give to other providers</p>	<p>The key lessons learned from the project that may be of use to other providers are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of developing and agreeing an action plan as quickly as possible, and updating the plan whenever milestones are reached or changes are made; • That persevering with an untried and misunderstood resource can bring benefits to individuals and the business; • The value in engaging the relevant specialists from across the business at an early stage, and impressing on them their central role in the project; • That there is value in trying new and innovative ideas in order to test their effectiveness, even if the end results do not always turn out to be positive; • The understanding that a project of this scale and time can not solve all the issues identified at the start, but can be a valuable step towards long-term change; • That any concerns / worries should be shared with the associate as soon as they arise to ensure that full support can be given and the project can return more value as a result.
<p>Telling others</p>	
<p>What have you done to share /disseminate this</p>	<p>A4e's dissemination activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showcasing the LIT project at this year's TfS conference;

<p>project with others in the sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrating the resource to visitors from the SFA, schools, colleges and other training providers during meetings and events; • Showing the value of the technology to employers as part of broader discussions on training and development.
<p>Provide a quote on your experience of the LSIS LIT project.</p>	<p>“The LIT project has provided A4e with an opportunity to consider how technology can enhance its teaching and learning activities and has brought together staff from across the business to develop a sustainable resource that can be further developed and improved in the future.</p> <p>We are very grateful to LSIS and our associate for the support and challenge they have given and can feel tangible benefits from being involved in the programme. Thank you.”</p>
<p>Are you happy for us to use this and your contact details for marketing and publications?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Contact details for further information</p>	<p>Michael Glenn 07739 953875 / mglenn@a4e.co.uk</p>

Please email all case studies to leadership@lsis.org.uk by 31st July 2012