

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

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LIT Project title	Environmental Technologies: Up-skilling the Workforce
The project	
What problem or issue you were trying to resolve or improve with this project	<p>The project aim was to develop a unique collaborative development approach, with an industrial partner, to establish training pathways to up-skill the workforce in environmental technologies, underpinned through e-Learning and communication technologies.</p> <p>An area of work and delivery model that Stockton Riverside College (SRC) had identified with a need for improvement and further development. This included the use of e-Learning across the organisation including a particular focus within the Faculty of Technical and Professional Skills.</p> <p>Map Group Ltd, continue to develop their renewable energy business model and recognise the need to up-skill existing staff to become multi-skilled engineers capable of delivering the business activities across the sector.</p>
Why did you go for a technology-based solution	<p>A technology based solution was chosen as the means of engaging and supporting industry based learners as the resources could be effectively used within the class/training room as well as, providing access from outside of the workplace/college and presented in a format appropriate for direct delivery or self study.</p> <p>The framework for delivery, developed as a result of the project, was intended to provide a prototype for future development and employer engagement across a wider range of sectors.</p>
What did the project cost: LSIS funding + your organisation's contribution	£9,600 (£6000 LiT + £3,600 SRC)

<p>Describe what you did and what happened</p>	<p>A number of meetings were held at the onset of the project to identify objectives, the scope and intended outcomes of the project. Initial meetings set out roles and responsibilities in relation to the research and development activities and underpinned the collaborative approach to addressing the demands and intended project success factors.</p> <p>The project focussed on developing a delivery model/framework to up-skill the existing workforce in relation to environmental technologies and to provide a teaching learning resource for both current and new entrants within this area of work.</p> <p>Discussion and evaluation of skills needs within the environmental technologies industry formed the agenda for early collaboration, along with the exploration and identification of accredited qualifications and training routes.</p> <p>Delivery platforms were considered and as part of this project it was decided that, in the first instance, the college Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) would provide access to teaching and learning resources. Project outcomes will inform potential future developments that consider mobile technologies and alternative technical platforms as part of the delivery framework. The main objective of this project was to set out and test the collaborative development and delivery model.</p> <p>In order to facilitate integration of the learning resource on the VLE and promote some level of interactivity the eLearning resource was developed within HTML, in much the same way as a web-based micro-site. The use of HTML was intended to help connectivity both in terms of access to the resource but also within the content of the resource itself. Additionally HTML could be readily modified and updated as both content and context evolved.</p> <p>The focus of the research and development for the learning materials was centred on the mandatory unit of the environmental technologies qualification (City and Guilds / EAL) entitled:</p> <p><i>‘Know the fundamental working principles, installation options and regulatory requirements for micro-renewable energy and water conservation technologies’.</i></p> <p>The materials were developed and incorporated into the HTML based framework housed on the college VLE.</p>
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One of the project objectives, involving testing and trialling the learning resources and delivery model with a cohort of learners was negatively impacted as a result of a lack of take up within the commercial activities within the mentor's sector. This is largely attributed to new developments within renewable energy sector being put on hold until the announcement and roll out of the Government's Green Deal initiative. This was originally planned for early 2012 and the project was ideally placed to respond to the early demand following the public launch of the strategy. The delay until autumn 2012 (late October) has severely impacted on take up of renewable technologies on a larger scale, this has also been affected by some uncertainty in the Feed in Tariff rates and Renewable Heat Incentives. Circumstances unforeseen by either the college or the mentor organisation.

In response to the 'Green Deal' delay the Mentor organisation 'tested the water' during the first quarter of this calendar year by involving third party and contracted marketing and installation services, the slow take up of renewable technologies led to the decision of postponement until after the Green Deal launch.

Never-the-less, the learning materials are in place and accessible by SRC and industry staff through the college VLE. These materials have been evaluated from the delivery team perspective rather than the learner's perspective within qualification delivery as had been intended, although response from learner evaluation was acquired from testing and trialling.

In general, tutors found the learning materials appropriate for the intended outcomes, most commented on how the resource was particularly suited to self-study. In addition, where tutors felt the materials were beneficial for classroom/workshop delivery, they also felt this would be more suitable when combined with practical activities. All reviewers were positive regarding content, accessibility and appropriateness, and that the resource met its intended learning / project outcomes.

Learners commented on the 'ease of use' and accessibility of the learning materials. In some instances they suggested a greater use of video resources would reduce the need for the amount of text required to underpin the learning concepts.

The delivery resources can be accessed by learners enrolled at the college, although it is now unlikely that a cohort will use these 'in anger' until either late 2012 or early 2013.

The benefits and impact

What benefits/
impact has the
project had on:::

a. the work/ effectiveness of your organisation

The project has enabled the college, in particular the Faculty of Technical and Professional Skills, to develop a response to employer demand through collaboration and joint development with a specific sector.

The project outcome has provided a delivery model that can be used as a blueprint for further work across a wider range of sectors; and involving a wider range of curriculum areas.

b. the cost/ efficiency of activities

Project funding has undoubtedly provided the catalyst and support through which the development work has been enabled.

Collaboration in the creation of a programme to address skills needs has provided the effective and efficient development of working practices that have subsequently resulted in largely successful outcomes. The production of learning materials, directly linked to the needs of industry, inevitably provide a more cost effective approach to programme construction.

Harnessing learning technologies such as the VLE provide a more effective delivery model by allowing learners (employees) to access the learning materials within their place of work, thereby minimising the time employees spend away from the workplace. At the same time self study, revision or support can be accessed when employees are within the college or indeed, 'working from home or elsewhere'.

The overall impact is one of reduced delivery costs through the provision of 'customised / contextualised' appropriate learning materials and streamline delivery framework that reduces the need for 'off the job' training.

c. any other aspect of your work

From the college perspective the project initiated a continuing collaboration with the MAP Group/Cablecom, with the intention of developing and delivering training programmes within the renewable energy sector both within the college environment and at the mentor organisation's workplace.

	<p>The MAP Group/Cablecom are developing a ‘Renewable Energy Centre’ within the local borough and the project has enabled a strengthening of the relationship between the organisations. In as much, that physical resources established and installed by the mentor’s organisation will provide the industry standard equipment that the college can access for programme delivery and training.</p>						
<p>What contribution to the success / smooth running of the project was made by:</p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="492 485 812 577">LSIS funding</td> <td data-bbox="812 485 1446 577">a little / some/ a lot / essential</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="492 577 812 669">Your mentor</td> <td data-bbox="812 577 1446 669">a little / some/ a lot / essential</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="492 669 812 741">LSIS Associate</td> <td data-bbox="812 669 1446 741">a little / some/ a lot / essential</td> </tr> </table>	LSIS funding	a little / some/ a lot / essential	Your mentor	a little / some/ a lot / essential	LSIS Associate	a little / some/ a lot / essential
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<p>Do you have any comments on the funding, mentor or LSIS Associate.</p>	<p>With regard to funding, while the level of funding undoubtedly provided the impetus to undertake this development, the real costs especially related to ‘time’ far exceed the funds received. Higher levels of funding may have been more effective in broadening the range of partners/employer based mentors and support an increase in the number of development staff engaged on the project.</p> <p>The role of the mentor was essential to the ‘tie up’ between what was developed and what was needed. Sector knowledge is critical to developing a response to industry needs.</p> <p>The LSIS Associate provided support throughout and was key to keeping the project phases on track.</p>						
<p>What lessons did you learn / what tips would you give to other providers</p>	<p>No matter how well you plan, everything takes longer than you would expect. Where possible develop a project team that is led and managed to keep actions on track particularly where one action impacts critically on another. From the perspective of this project there was minimal impact on project outcomes as a result of long term sickness within the team but this did increase the remaining workload.</p> <p>The best made plans... be aware that where your project may be reliant on external factors beyond your control, that a contingency plan may be required from the outset. This project was intended to provide a response to the upsurge in demand for Environmental Technologies following the Government’s launch of the Green Deal. Unfortunately the postponement of this launch impacted on the implementation of some of the objectives although the intended project outcomes were largely achieved.</p>						

	Ensure that where third parties are involved, such as mentors/partner organisations, that you are assured of their 'buy in' and commitment to your project. This did not provide any issues for the project but it is easy to visualise the difficulties in project development should the mentor be uncommitted to the cause. The mentor was key to the project development and essential to future implementation.
Telling others	
What have you done to share /disseminate this project with others in the sector	<p>The materials developed through the project have been shared with sector organisations through mentor contacts and trainers. Similarly, the college has disseminated the project outcomes internally, through both presentations to staff and the sharing of reports with senior managers.</p> <p>The materials have been highlighted with STEM champions through the Regional STEM network and educational organisations have been invited to assess the materials and approach to delivery.</p>
Provide a quote on your experience of the LSIS LIT project.	Support from the LiT project was critical in providing the impetus for developing both the new curriculum materials and the delivery framework, as well as, maintaining the momentum to ensure successful completion.
Are you happy for us to use this and your contact details for marketing and publications?	Yes
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