

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

RCF Project title	LSIS Leadership with Technology
Name of lead contact	Laurence Elliott (Morley College)
Consortium members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Education College Bexley • Croydon Adult Learning & Training (CALAT) • Morley College • NALS Newham • Working Men's College
Other contributing organisations (if any)	JISC RSC London; ULCC
The project	
What problem or issue you were trying to resolve or improve with this project	The project set out to explore the potential of eILPs to drive increased engagement with Moodle by practitioners and learners. In contrast with FE and HE institutions, Adult & Community Learning (ACL) providers often struggle to develop use of VLEs. Factors impacting uptake typically include large numbers of part-time staff and learners; a wide range of IT skills in both groups; small eLearning training and support teams; and limited IT resources. Within the sector, Art & Design has further been identified as a particularly difficult area to engage with technology.
What was your solution	The consortium installed a custom version of the Individual Learning Plan (ILP 2.0) block for Moodle 2 designed by ULCC for the project. Four out of five of the consortium providers were new to the module. To pilot the eILP, each provider was given a brief to recruit two Art & Design practitioners covering a range of subject areas and accreditation. The final mix included four accredited and six non-accredited courses, with a range of subject areas including: art foundation, dressmaking, painting & drawing, photography, and stained glass.
Describe what you did and what happened	<p>Project Initiation</p> <p>The Project Steering Group first met with Cass Breen (Project Sponsor) and Philip Butler (Project Consultant) at the end of August 2012. The five consortium members were represented on the Steering Group by Janet Evans (AEC Bexley), Wendy Lavery (CALAT), Farhad Esfandiari (NALS Newham), Gillian Burton (Working Men's College), and Laurence Elliott, Project Manager (Morley College). Philip Butler, who had developed the original project concept, gave an overview of the project's background, deliverables, and projected benefits. Other areas covered included discussion and agreement of the project initiation document, project schedule, and roles & responsibilities for the Project Leads.</p>

Project Orientation

Organisational support during the project was provided by Martin Sepion (JISC RSC London), who in his role as ACL Advisor already had established relationships with all the providers within the consortium. Joint site visits with the Project Manager were organised in October/November to explain the drivers for the project, discuss aims & objectives, and ensure that Project Leads understood the project schedule and milestones. The capacity of individual organisations to undertake MIS integration with Moodle was also explored at this stage. These JISC-led meetings also greatly supported the process of developing working relationships at an early stage in the project.

eILP Training

To kick-start training a London Arts Regional Collaboration (LARC) Moodle area was developed by Phil George, the lead trainer contracted to the project. The site provided practitioners with a period of online familiarisation and socialisation during October/November. Practitioners were encouraged to use the facilitated discussion forums to share resources, exchange ideas, collaborate and support each other. Discussion was also promoted around the challenges and advantages of using online learning with specific groups of learners.

Following on from this online phase, the lead trainer delivered two face-to-face workshops in late November. The sessions gave practitioners an opportunity to discuss project aims including engaging and supporting adult learners; raising standards in teaching and learning; and improving quality. Previous online activities were consolidated with a demonstration of Moodle's collaborative tools and the project eILP. The training event also provided the first opportunity for team members to meet each other, with all but one attending on the day.

After receiving feedback from the event the Steering Group was able to be much more focused on what it wanted from future training. Project Leads identified a need for predominantly hands-on workshops centred on eILPs rather than Moodle, which the providers were themselves able to cover. A hands-on session was organised at CALAT in December which drew on the organisation's experience of working with a previous version of the eILP module. Hand-outs and screencasts were provided for the training session and were made available to the wider consortium via CALAT's Moodle site. The NALS Newham project team organised their own eILP training session in January 2013.

eILP Implementation

By early November the project eILP had been installed on all of the five consortium Moodle sites. CALAT added the project fields to its pre-existing eILP. The Steering Group agreed to implement the eILP from the beginning of the Spring 2013 term as it was felt that introducing it mid-term would be less successful. Project Leads ensured that Moodle

	<p>courses were set up for the programmes; coached practitioners who were new to the VLE; and organised accounts and enrolments for learners where required.</p> <p>A range of strategies were adopted, including 100% use of the eILP; a hybrid approach using 50% paper-based and 50% electronic ILPs; and use of the eILP as a course journal. Some practitioners felt their learners would not find the term 'eILP' user-friendly and described it as a 'Learner Journal' or 'Reflections'. Learners were encouraged to use the eILPs outside the classroom, particularly where access to PCs and/or reliable Wi-Fi access was an issue. Practitioners emphasised the reflective nature of the eILP, communicating that learners had ownership of the tool.</p> <p>The team discussed success measures for the project including collection of quantitative and qualitative data. To measure distance travelled over the life of the project, the Steering Group developed separate benchmarking surveys for practitioners and learners in discussion with Martin Sepion. The surveys included questions designed to measure shifts in IT skills and gauge differences in perceptions between practitioners and learners. Usage data for the institutional eILPs was also collected at the end of the project.</p> <p>Support materials</p> <p>Moodle and eILP support materials were provided by the lead trainer via the LARC site. These included several narrated screencasts specifically produced for the project. In the second half of the project, the Steering Group made the strategic decision to commission a Xerte training session rather than asking the trainer to produce further screencasts. The consortium was fortunate that AEC Bexley already had Xerte installed on an in-house server and the one day workshop was run successfully there in the Spring term. User guides for practitioners and learners have been created in Xerte to support use of the eILP.</p>
The collaboration	
<p>How well did the collaboration work and what were the key factors that led to this</p>	<p>Project Steering Group</p> <p>The Steering Group met face-to-face on a monthly basis throughout the project and this has helped to build good working relationships. While it was agreed that it would be beneficial for Project Leads to visit other providers, due to the wide geographical spread a central location was preferred for meetings. Project Leads were also able to meet face-to-face at training workshops and LSIS events. A project management resource area was developed for Project Leads on Morley's Moodle site, providing a discussion forum, updated documentation, a project events calendar and other supporting materials. A Google Drive account was also set up for the Steering Group with the aim of allowing Project Leads to update their own data on project files. In practice email tended to be heavily relied on as the primary communication and distribution channel.</p>

	<p>Art & Design Practitioners</p> <p>One of the secondary aims of the project was to work towards developing a community of Art & Design practitioners using technology. Opportunities for networking were built into training events and forums were available on the LARC site from early in the project. Within their own organisations, most Project Leads were able to build a strong team ethos. More face-to-face activities and events aimed specifically at practitioners would probably have been required to replicate this across the consortium. A strategy which could usefully be considered for future projects would be to set up cross-institutional buddying between practitioners from similar disciplines. This could bring benefits where, for example, a practitioner with low VLE skills was partnered with a more experienced Moodle user.</p> <p>Sustainability</p> <p>At the penultimate Steering Group meeting Project Leads agreed to maintain regular contact beyond the lifetime of the initial funded project. The intention is to enable providers to review the impact of the project over a more extended period than the timescale has allowed. An endline survey will be run towards the end of the Summer term 2013. This is in part a reflection of how well the Project Leads have gelled as a management team and it is hoped it will ultimately lead to further collaboration and knowledge sharing.</p>
<p>The benefits and impact of the project</p>	

<p>What benefits/ impact has the project had on:</p>	<p>a. the work/ effectiveness of the organisations in your consortium</p> <p>Project Leads at all providers have communicated that their project management skills have increased through participation. All have benefitted from the extensive knowledge and experience in this area of Victor Dejean, LSIS Associate. A dedicated forum was used to encourage discussion topics including, for example, the merits of consensus vs. collaborative leadership styles. Information about PRINCE2 terminology, which was originally pegged as the methodology for the project, was provided via a Moodle Glossary. Collectively the Steering Group were able to develop understanding in a range of areas, including successful team building; commissioning training from external providers; and requirements for monitoring, review and reporting.</p> <p>All organisations within the consortium have reported that the project has developed use of technology within their own Art & Design curriculum areas. This focus has given these departments the opportunity to take on the role of technological leaders within their organisations. As well as developing use of Moodle and eILPs, practitioners have been given hands-on experience of technologies including iPads, Jing and Xerte. Practitioners have also benefitted professionally from extended involvement in the delivery of a project pilot. Project Leads have already put in place plans to share lessons from the project with other curriculum areas.</p>
	<p>b. the cost/ efficiency of activities</p> <p>Due to the relatively short timescale of the project it is too early to identify clear cost efficiencies. As all the providers already use paper-based ILPs it has been inevitable that there has been some duplication, with practitioners having to satisfy their own organisation's pre-existing requirements for course paperwork. It appears that this has depended to some extent on the flexibility of quality assurance requirements within individual organisations. It is likely that the real potential of eILPs to introduce efficiencies will be found with full MIS integration. The project has been an effective stepping stone towards implementing this and is an area that several members of the consortium are looking into.</p>

	<p>c. any other aspect(s) of your work</p> <p>iPads were provided to practitioners as a means of compensating them for any extra time they may need to give to the project. As the project progressed there was a growing desire by the Steering Group to develop this strand as a means of supporting use of eILPs. NALS Newham took on the use of iPads in class as a special area of research. Several Project Leads were aware of interesting work done with iPads by David Goldenberg at Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES). As a result the Steering Group commissioned an 'iPad for Teaching' training session from WAES in February. Topics covered included hands-on experience of education Apps as well as institutional management of iPads and iTunes accounts.</p>						
<p>What contribution to the success / smooth running of the project was made by:</p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>LSIS funding</td> <td>essential</td> </tr> <tr> <td>LSIS Associate</td> <td>essential</td> </tr> <tr> <td>JISC RSC London</td> <td>essential</td> </tr> </table>	LSIS funding	essential	LSIS Associate	essential	JISC RSC London	essential
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<p>What did the project cost: LSIS funding + your consortium's contribution</p>	<p>The project was delivered within the £30k LSIS funding. Providers had initially signed up to contribute £3k each to the project for MIS integration work. After discussion with LSIS it was agreed that this was not achievable within the time constraints of the project and was removed from the scope.</p> <p>The time and involvement required from Project Leads were considerably more than initially anticipated and these were absorbed by individual organisations.</p>						
<p>What lessons did you learn / what tips would you give to other providers</p>	<p>eILP Implementation</p> <p>Due to the short timescale available it has not been possible to fully evaluate the use of eILPs. However, based on the team's experience to date the Steering Group would make the following general recommendations to providers considering implementing an eILP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is recommended that teams meet early with their QA manager(s) to get guidance around integrating use of the eILP with the organisation's other systems. • Requirements for eILP training and support are likely to impact on the work of eLearning staff and need to be factored into planning. • It was felt by team members that the term 'individual learning plan' was itself problematic and the acronym 'eILP' simply compounded this. Practitioners in particular felt that they would have more success by renaming the eILP to something more user-friendly. • Timing emerged as an important consideration during the project. Learners are more likely to accept eILPs if these are introduced at the beginning of a course rather than part way through. 						

- The scenario of several practitioners inputting into a learner's eILP was flagged up as a potential issue. This is something that needs to be considered where a learner is studying on more than one programme or on courses with multiple practitioners, e.g. art foundation.
- Issues were flagged up around completing the eILP in-class where limited or no PCs are available. Wi-Fi access in classrooms can be poor if several users are online simultaneously. In these circumstances, learners would need to be encouraged to access the eILP at home and/or via their own mobile devices.
- Whilst recognising the pedagogical value of eILPs, tutors are likely to regard use of eILPs as being an addition to their normal workload. Organisations should work far as possible to ensure all duplication between paper-based and electronic ILPs is eliminated.

eILP Design

The consortium has focused on identifying generic requirements for electronic learning plans rather than assessing the specific eILP design used for the project. Practitioners have provided the following initial feedback:

- Course paper-work requirements for accredited and non-accredited courses can vary in organisations and need to be factored into eILP design.
- A simplified toolbar would help users more than the standard HTML editor, particularly when some of the options aren't relevant or available.
- Uploading images both inside and outside the Moodle editor should be an option. Some practitioners communicated that they would be unlikely to use an eILP if image upload wasn't available.
- A design which displayed all fields in one view rather than tabs could be simpler for both practitioners and learners to navigate.
- The terminology used on section headings can be confusing for some learners. Administrators should have the option to edit these headings to address this and also fit an eILP better with the requirements of their own organisation.

The consortium is not yet in a position to assess the viability of developing a single eILP design that would work across the ACL sector. Initial indications are that organisations tend to have their own unique QA requirements. A more flexible eILP with customisable sections may meet this need.

Training

It took a little time for a consensus to emerge around training requirements for the project. In general terms Project Leads felt that hands-on training would give providers most sustainability, i.e.

	<p>acquiring the skills for their organisations rather than commissioning a third party to create materials. Although the initial project training focus was on practitioners, it was felt important that Project Leads should also attend face-to-face training. This was on the basis that part-time practitioners are generally less permanent members of staff and there was concern that the organisations could easily lose their skills/knowledge. Beyond the project, most Project Leads in their role as ILT trainers would be expected to train/support practitioners in their use of the e-ILPs.</p> <p>Support Needs</p> <p>The selection of team members emerged as an issue in terms of support required. Two of the consortium providers had to replace practitioners at different points within the project. Project Leads reported that team members who weren't committed enough and/or had IT low skills sometimes required more support than was sustainable. This also raised the issue of the resources made available to manage project activities. Some Project Leads reported having to greatly rethink their approach to time management whilst others were able to negotiate remission from teaching commitments.</p> <p>Roles & Responsibilities</p> <p>An understanding of roles & responsibilities at all levels was an area which could usefully have been developed further within the project. Time needs to be made available at the beginning of projects to agree a clear definition of roles & responsibilities. It can be a mistake to assume that team members will either have prior experience or the transferable skills and knowledge to participate fully in a project. Communication responsibilities, e.g. flagging up issues as they occur, emerged as a key issue in this context.</p> <p>Ownership</p> <p>The project's LSIS Associate flagged up the importance of working towards a sustainable collaborative partnership. To support this, it was felt it would be useful to allocate specific responsibilities to members of the Steering Group to both share some of the project management workload and develop these areas further for the project. Project Leads reported on four areas at each monthly Steering Group meeting: project training needs; support requirements from management to promote eILP usage; ways in which iPads could support the project; and the potential impact of MIS integration on use of eILPs.</p>
Telling others	
<p>What have you done to share /disseminate this project with others in the sector</p>	<p>Although not a member of the consortium, City Lit generously hosted the project's first face-to-face training event and City Lit eLearning staff were invited to attend the session (Nov-12).</p> <p>Members of the Project Steering Group will be delivering a breakout session at the JISC RSC London end of year event (Jun-13).</p>

	<p>The team will be disseminating project documents via JISC RSC London where these have relevance to the sector, e.g. Project eILP Strategy. It is also planned that an expanded lessons report, including endline survey results, will be developed by the end of the summer term and shared.</p> <p>User guides for practitioners and learners have been created in Xerte to support use of the eILP and will be hosted by AEC Bexley.</p> <p>The Steering Group are in discussion with JISC about further opportunities for dissemination within and outside the London region.</p>				
<p>Provide a quote on your experience of the LSIS RCF project.</p>	<p>“It has been a pleasure to look at ILT in a different way and rethink the access we provide in college for learners.” Gillian Burton, Working Men’s College</p> <p>“We were very fortunate to have had an LSIS Associate with extensive real world project management experience.” Laurence Elliott, Morley College</p> <p>“Martin Sepion’s input at an early stage of the project was critical in creating cohesion between the different providers within the consortium.” Laurence Elliott, Morley College</p> <p>“Well worth the involvement. Particularly working with the other colleges to manage the project.” Farhad Esfandiari, NALS Newham</p> <p>“The intervention of Victor Dejean, LSIS Associate, at key points in the project was critical in keeping the Steering Group on track and underpinned the development of a collaborative partnership.” Laurence Elliott, Morley College</p> <p>“The professionalism and commitment of Victor Dejean, LSIS Associate, served as a role model for both the Project Manager and consortium Project Leads.” Laurence Elliott, Morley College</p> <p>“The project has provided a good base for collaboration between five adult learning providers. It would be nice if some way can be found to continue this collaboration between our organisations.” Farhad Esfandiari, NALS Newham</p> <p>“The project brought us huge benefits regarding general knowledge of how other colleges are working in the area of learning technologies.” Janet Evans, AEC Bexley</p> <p>“Martin Sepion’s in-depth understanding of college systems helped the Project Leads to think strategically about the issues around implementing MIS integration.” Laurence Elliott, Morley College</p>				
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Contact information	Yes				

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