

# Finalist's case study

## Redbridge Institute of Adult Education Student Engagement Inside Outside Sculpture Trail and Eco Garden

### Section 1 About the project

#### Summary

A community project engaging students in the creation of a Sculpture Trail and Eco Garden showcasing learners' skills, promoting sustainability and use of recycled materials - enabling the public to see 'outside' what students learn 'inside'. Student volunteers have built a recycled plastic bottle greenhouse, encouraged biodiversity and created a community learning resource.

#### Project partners

The London Borough of Redbridge have supported the project through an Arts Grant of £3,000 and London Olympic Legacy Funding of £3,158. The Arts Development Officer from Redbridge Vision Culture and Leisure Trust has acted as a critical friend and project evaluator.

### Section 2 The results

#### The problem

The Institute is almost entirely surrounded by concrete and tarmac except for a strip of what was unused land.

#### The approach

- Using community art workshops to create public art on an environmental theme using recycled materials wherever possible
- Inspiring student and staff volunteers to transform the unused green space with a Sculpture Trail and Eco Garden and accessible paths which have improved drainage
- Involving students with learning disabilities on woodworking and conservation courses to design and create bug boxes, bird houses and insect homes for the Eco Garden
- Building a greenhouse from 'waste' using 1,500 recycled plastic bottles collected through a student campaign
- Changing the Café tender and using a contractor who promotes healthy eating and will make use of produce from the Eco Garden
- Setting up community gardening workshops for homeless people to inspire these learners with a sense of achievement for the vegetable garden they have created and used in cookery classes



#### Profile

- Adult and Community Learning
- 5,250 learners (692 FTE)
- 194 staff (96.2 FTE)
- urban

#### Category supported by



## Our goals

To use the inspiration of the sustainable London Olympic Games with its Cultural Olympiad and vision for transforming the Olympic Park to engage learners in volunteering to develop our own green open space.

## Obstacles and solutions

Obstacles	Solutions
Generating interest and engagement of part time adult students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The campaign to collect 1,500 empty plastic bottles to construct our own greenhouse was a great success in getting the whole student group involved. The campaign was widely promoted with regular updates on achievement of target numbers and what was still needed. This really motivated more students to get involved.</li> <li>Promoting opportunities for students from different disciplines to work together on the design and build of a public art for the trail and using recycled materials inspired learners.</li> </ul>
Previous Café contractor resistant to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Café tender specification included requirement for healthy, value for money meal options and making use of the Eco Garden for fresh vegetables and composting food waste</li> </ul>

## Performance and results

We have provided a blueprint for other ACL providers and Community Associations in any towns/cities where there is limited outdoor space and funding. The blueprint demonstrates what motivates adult learners, engages them in sustainability, promotes healthy living and demonstrates how an unused space can be transformed to provide an open air classroom and area where learners' work can be fully appreciated by many.

## Section 3 The future

### Lessons learned

We learnt early in the project that our initial timescales were unrealistic. Breaking the project into two phases with the first focused on the Sculpture Trail and the second on the creation of the Eco Garden made the project more manageable and achievable. It also gave us time to secure further funding and sponsorship.

### Sharing our project

We have promoted our project through the local press and provided a presentation on sustainability at the Redbridge Green Business Awards in June 2013. [http://www.ilfordrecorder.co.uk/ilford-life/organisations/ilford\\_business\\_green\\_firms\\_go\\_for\\_gold\\_at\\_green\\_business\\_redbridge\\_awards\\_1\\_237454](http://www.ilfordrecorder.co.uk/ilford-life/organisations/ilford_business_green_firms_go_for_gold_at_green_business_redbridge_awards_1_237454). This has enhanced our reputation in the business community and the Institute is now a member of the Redbridge Chamber of Commerce which has improved our links with employers.

A Big Lunch Event was held in the new garden in the summer to support the Redbridge FoodBank with a collection of donated food to support local people in need.



We have provided informal support for other ACL providers considering applying for a Green Gown Award through the London LEAFA and HOLEX network of ACL providers.

## What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

Becoming a Green Gown Award Finalist has been an exciting achievement which recognizes our strong commitment to meeting the needs of disadvantaged individuals and communities. This project has showcased the success of our student engagement and community partnerships and their contribution to sustainability which will promote further collaboration.

## Further information

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