Stepping Up in Sustainability 2011-12

Walsall Adult and Community College case study

Title of project	**Employer Engagement; use of on-line technology to reduce environmental impact and maximise social capital.**
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1. **Aims of the project**	The aims of the is to demonstrate the way IT and web technology can: • Reduce the environmental impact of our employer engagement • Demonstrate how on-line technology can be used as part of employer engagement • Demonstrate the financial, social and environmental benefits of challenging existing approaches • Encourage employers to use the approach as part of other projects.
2. **Situation: Identify the situation or issue that faced you**	WACC have a large number of apprenticeships where there is a requirement to undertake 6 weekly reviews with employers / managers / apprentices. Historically this activity is undertaken through face to face meetings and routinely means 9 /10 visits to each employer per annum and this has a significant environmental, social and resource impact. Within the academic year of 2011 / 2012 there was a potential of 819 visits. (Assumption of a minimum of 91 learners and 9 visits per annum).
3. **Task: Define the outcomes you needed to achieve**	The outcomes set out below are those identified in the submission document. • To reduce the environmental impact with regard to the delivery of our employer engagement services, • Increased understanding of the use of ICT and Web Technology for employer engagement on apprenticeship based programmes, • Materials, resources and learning which can be shared with the sector.

	We have achieved these outcomes through: • Reducing the emissions by using 'Skype' to engage with employers rather than face to face visits. • Undertook training with our employers on the use of 'Skype' web based technology. • Developed a training manual on how to use 'Skype'.
4. Actions that you took in order to achieve your plan, and your approach	Initially, the project began by discussions with individuals; this gave an insight into how they felt about using Web based technology and guidance on the best way to approach future training. However, a mistake was made by not discussing the use of 'Skype' with the ICT Support staff of the local council. The training manual was developed by using information from the 'Skype' website and adapting it to ensure ease of use and appropriate web cams for all to use. It is important to note that the best webcams to purchase are those with microphones, as it was identified that some employers' computers do not have sound cards. The biggest difficulty experienced was using corporate computers within the local council. Councils ICT structure are very tightly controlled and special permissions have had to be obtained which has delayed some managers taking part in the project. Another issue that required thought was signatures from employers for audit purposes. This was addressed by using email. An email is sent to the employer to agree a time to 'Skype' and the name/s of the apprentices whose review will be undertaken and a copy of the review documentation. Once the review is complete the employer / manager sends a confirmation email as an electronic signature. However, as the project has progressed it has been decided to use one of our tablet computers and obtain an electronic signature from the employer / managers at the first possible opportunity.
5. Results that you obtained	During the lifetime of the project the Employer Gateway had identified that 158 reviews were to be undertaken. However, due to the issues with council ICT permissions we were only able to undertake 2 reviews for 26 apprentices from 10 organisations (total 52 reviews) by 'Skype' all others were face to face. To calculate the mileage / time travelling AA route planner has been used, however this does not take account of parking / walking time to the venue but does take account of the return journey.

	Staff costs with regarding to this travelling time have been calculated using the average hourly rate of the staff (including on costs) involved.
	Total Mileage saved 356 miles Total Mileage costs saved @ 0.65p per mile £231.40 Travel time saved (excluding parking / walking) 9 hours Carbon emissions saved 73kg Staff Costs (time saved during travel) £170.00 Although these are tangible savings there is also the wellbeing aspect for staff to be considered.
6. What made the project a success? What were the key ingredients?	The success of the project is down to the employers embracing the use of 'Skype'. Only one person had previously used 'Skype' as a social tool. It was interesting to note that two people did not attend the training as they were 'scared' and very 'apprehensive' of ICT and therefore sent other staff to attend who were just as 'scared' and 'apprehensive'. The development of a simple step by step training manual showing the processes once they return to the office also helped. The training evaluation shows that those attending found the following most interesting; 　　*'Hands on use of new technology'* 　　*'Knowing how to use & chat & see people – having a play'* 　　*'Opportunity to learn about benefits of some new technology'* 　　*'The training was facilitated in a 'fun' relaxed manner which* 　　*made the session enjoyable as well as informative'.* 　　*'Learning how to use Skype and the benefits of doing so'.* It was also felt that work practices would be changed by; 　　*'Improving communications'.* 　　*'This is an extremely useful tool when working with* 　　*apprentices'.* 　　*'Environmental and time impact. Reduced Travel costs'* 　　*'Save time as you can 'Skype' rather than visit in person'.* 　　*'I will be able to utilise my time more effectively i.e. external* 　　*meetings etc.'* 　　*'Will contribute to the sustainability agenda.'* It can be seen from the comments above that those undertaking the project are able to contribute to our project aims and education for sustainable development as the project; 　• Extends knowledge and understanding; 　• Fosters dialogue;

	• Empowers employers and staff to access and understand information, take part in decision making and make informed changes in their lifestyles and consumptions.
7. **Any resources or tools produced by the project**	Training Manual

8. **Total costs of the project**	LSIS funding	Match funding		Total funding
	£5,000	£2,500		£7,500

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