



Leading learning and skills



BUILDING CAPACITY, WIDENING PARTICIPATION

EVALUATION REPORT

ESF CO-FINANCE PROJECT

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EUROPEAN UNION
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**PRESTON COLLEGE
FUNDING FINDERS LTD
PARTNERSHIP TEAM LTD**

Introduction/overview

The project building capacity, widening participation, aimed to develop the capacity of the Voluntary and Community sector organisations, through the development and delivery of a 'learn to teach' programme, in order to provide them with the skills needed to deliver their services in a more structured way. This enabled them to develop the skills needed to also provide evidence of an individual clients progression, and any learning achieved.

The project then aimed to support the Voluntary and Community organisations, in structuring their services into 'accredited tailored learning programmes'. This is achieved through the provision of training and mentoring(for the organisations staff and volunteers) in AQA development and assessment techniques.

In addition the project aimed to provide the participating groups with training and support, on implementing the new DfES Progress File (the alternative to the previous Record of Achievement system, mainly used in schools). As part of the project, the groups would be piloting the use of the Progress Files with the Voluntary and Community sector.

The Voluntary and Community groups would have, having undertaken the training, the skills to write AQA units of accreditation, tailored to the needs of their clients. These would be checked and accredited by the AQA. The Voluntary and Community groups would then deliver the AQA units to their clients (75 to achieve) whilst providing them with a DfES Progress File, in order to evidence their progression and additional outcomes. This also provides the client beneficiaries with their own portfolio of achievements linked, where applicable to a certified qualification. This enables them to take control of their own learning and encourages progression. In the past, many of the organisations delivering the training/activity, have kept evidence of a learners progression and achievements, however, in many cases the learner cannot always understand what they have archived, particularly when the training has been delivered informally or as an activity, rather than as a 'training course'.

Partners

Lancashire Adult and Community Learning Alliance (LACLA)

LACLA will participate in engaging voluntary and community groups in the project from their members. LACLA will also be a member of the steering group and will help to develop the quality assurance in learning and learning facilitator programme, which meets their LSC aims of capacity building voluntary & community groups, and their quality improvement programme with their members currently being developed within the Ofsted/Ali inspection framework. LACLA will participate in widening the scope of this project through their networks with other associations. The project also links with the DfES Progress File LIF Bid Project which LACLA is also a partner of. The project

will also enable LACLA and other associations to increase their communications with voluntary & community organisations thereby strengthening community networks.

Name of Project Partner: Deepdale SRB Partnership

The 4 task groups of the partnership will be involved in developing and participating in the learning programmes for staff and volunteers, who will then go on to deliver non formal/informal learning to their client groups whilst developing their capacity to adhere to self assessment frameworks and evidencing of outcomes. Progress File will be piloted to evidence these outcomes. Deepdale SRB will be a steering group member and be involved in dissemination activities. Their involvement links to their exit strategy of becoming a regeneration trust in 2003. Respect All Fans, football initiative (RAFFI) group will also be involved as part of the SRB partnership, other SRB partnership members include minority ethnic women, and the Lancashire Youth Volunteer Programme. This partner did not become actively involved in the project, although a number of their organisations were keen to participate. Due to the SRB Partnership needing to concentrate on their Trust status.

Name of Project Partner: YMCA Lancaster

YMCA will become a steering group member, in order to participate in the development of programmes, linked to their provision to clients including ex offenders/partnership in prisons, and disadvantaged youths. The volunteers and clients will be beneficiaries of the programme. This partner was actively involved and also developed AQA units in drug awareness.

Name of Project Partner: Sport England

Sport England will participate in the project as a steering group member, in order to widen the scope of the project to learning through sport activities, linked to all youth group providers. Sport England will bring members including local authority sports development officers, and the Lancashire Sport Partnership Group. This partner did not fully participate in the project, as many of their members delivered activities to clients under the age of 16. However, Sport England did deliver a training session to YMCA Lancaster on coaching skills.

Name of Project Partner: Education Business Partnership - Progress File

The Partnership Team responsible for the Dfes Progress File will be a steering group member and will participate in developing the Progress File with the groups in relation to evidencing the soft outcomes of the project with clients. The partnership team will also develop the programme modules as AQA accredited units. This partner was actively involved.

**Name of Project Partner: Healthy Communities Commonwealth Games Project
Passport Commonwealth Games Project**

Representatives from these groups will participate in the steering group in order to widen the participation of the project within the legacy programmes of passport for youth and healthy communities. Groups participating in these programmes will be invited to participate in the Quality Assurance in learning and learning facilitator programmes. The

Progress File will be developed in order to evidence the target groups participation in the commonwealth games passport and healthy communities programmes, in order to ensure these programmes continue after the life of the games. These programmes will then be used by the voluntary and community sector to deliver to their clients as mainstream programmes. Unfortunately the organization responsible for these groups, disbanded, and became a private organization, with a different agenda. However, Lancashire Outdoor, was one of the groups in these programmes, and participated in this project

Name of Project Partner: Funding Finders Ltd

Funding Finders Ltd will participate in the steering group and will co-ordinate the programme with Preston College. A Funding Finders member of staff is currently an Ofsted/Ali inspector and will participate in delivering and developing the learning/Quality Programmes. Funding Finders will also participate in evaluating and monitoring the programme, along with disseminating the activities to relevant organisations across the country. Funding Finders will also participate in developing the sustainability of the project, and is a partner in the LIF Progress File project. This organization fully participated in the project, with no change of role.

Name of Project Partner: LSP

A member of the Neighbourhood Renewal LSP will be invited onto the steering group, several of the organisations involved in neighbourhood renewal, participated in the project, and provided guidance on organisations to target for the project.

Name of Project Partner: LSC

It is also the aim of the project to invite relevant youth/community representatives from the LSC to participate in the steering group – It was decided that it was not possible for the LSC to become a steering group member, of one of their projects they were funding, however, Ray Begley, from the LSC is a steering group member of the Partnership Team, and was kept up to date with progress, and provided guidance on any issues we raised with regards to sustainability through mainstreaming of activities.

In addition to the above, several organisations became involved with activities in the project, including Preston Learning Together Partnership (PLTP), who became great advocates for the project.

Achievements

See Appendix 1 for the tracking system developed which outlines details of the outputs and outcomes. The final LSC monthly output summary sheet is also enclosed in Appendix 2

Milestones

The project did, for several reasons start a little later than planned. However, in the main, most outputs and milestones were delivered on time. Primarily this was due to the fact that, even though this was a new scheme, we had undertaken pre project evaluation studies in relation to the needs of the groups, and had discussions with the potential mainstream funders, who had outlined a need for building the Capacity of voluntary and community groups in order for them to be able to attract potential mainstream funding in the future. This could potentially be achieved if the groups could evidence achievement and progression, and could evidence the quality of their learning provision.

Areas of Innovation

The project was innovative as it provided a new service of training and support to the voluntary and community sector. The training and support provided, would provide the sector with the facilities and skills to work towards being mainstream providers of learning, thereby, long term, helping to reduce their grant dependency.

In addition the project enabled the clients of the groups to, not only progress, but would also provide them with evidence and certification for their achievements, thereby supporting their progression onto further learning or employment.

Many of the beneficiaries were from disadvantaged groups ie people with mental or physical disabilities, those with drug/alcohol dependency, those with low/no skills, ethnic minorities, lone parents etc. Therefore the project provided those most disadvantaged, to gain support, tailored to their needs, which had the additional benefit of being accredited. The project also aims longer term to provide an innovative solution, to the Voluntary and Community Sectors, accessing mainstream funds for the delivery of services, through not only the evidencing of outcomes, but also by providing them with a network, which in the future(the project has been approved to receive a further 2 years funding) aims to provide an infrastructure for the groups to work together to access funding, ,made easier due to their joint volume in relation to outcomes.

New AQA units were also written and delivered by the Voluntary and Community groups, which allowed the training to be tailored to the needs and abilities of their client groups. Indeed where necessary, the units were revised for individual clients, who were unable to achieve all the necessary outcomes, thereby providing them with the opportunity to achieve units of accreditation according to their individual, rather than the groups abilities.

Good practice

The project has already had recognition from LACLA, and the LSC through verbal meetings, that this project is a model of good practice in relation to,

- Building the Capacity of the Voluntary and Community sector to deliver learning,

- Developing AQA units of accreditation for first rung ladder learning
- Provision and support in implementing the DfES progress File as a means of evidencing Progress
- Potential for the project to become a network for Voluntary and Community providers of learning, to make use of quantities of scale
- Recognising and recording achievement and progress
- Provision of first stage learning for those wishing to deliver learning programmes, the learn to teach programme, has now been included in the AQA Professional Development Portfolio.
- Provision of support and materials to help organisations delivering learning, to understand and work towards the ALI inspectorate Self Assessment Criteria(available on the Website)
- Provision of example AQA units written as part of the programme, for others to utilise/amend for their own purposes.

Areas for Improvement/Lessons learnt

The lessons learnt include

- The need for intensive support initially, in order for the Voluntary and Community groups to implement AQA units and Progress File systems
- The amount of time necessary for the Voluntary and Community groups, to develop their systems, AQA units, Progress File systems etc
- The original groups participating in the project, may not always have the capacity/resource, to achieve the outcomes in the timescale available, therefore additional numbers participating /aiming to participate, may need to be greater than the numbers identified in the outputs
- Those who embraced the project, were very keen to write several AQA's for many of their activities, however, the project only allowed for a maximum of 2 per organisation to be written. This was exceeded, but costs for this were not covered by the funding.

Areas for improvement

- Numerous organisations were keen to be involved, but their beneficiary clients were out of the age range for the project, this meant turning people down who wanted to participate, perhaps this could have been made clearer in the marketing literature
- Additional numbers of organisations, will be encouraged to participate in the next round of the project, to ensure outcomes are more easily achieved within the time scale, as some organisations are able to develop faster than others.
- Provision is needed for additional AQA's to be written where requested by the organisations, this needs to be implemented in future assessment of costs
- Our beneficiary forms did not always capture enough information, more care needs to be taken in ensuring that evidence is available re a persons eligibility.

- Additional data from the groups needs to be collected at regular intervals, rather than at the end of the project, as it is not always easy to access information all at once and on time, at the end of a project. This is made more difficult, due to the groups providing services across several areas of Lancashire. Beneficiary forms were collected where possible as soon as the individual joined the project, however, evaluation forms etc, were kept out in the centres, but we should have collected samples throughout the project. Evaluation forms were checked on site, but copies not taken. This also applies to any other evidence needed for dissemination/presentation/evaluation purposes.
- We needed to be prepared for the huge amount of interest the project generated, as only part way through the programme, we had identified the relevant number of groups to participate, as needed for the project outcomes.
- Although we have encouraged the groups to participate in steering group activities, this has proved difficult, with regard to taking them away from their centres. We have found therefore, that the best approach has been primarily to involve them on an individual basis, allowing them to develop their activities, in the most appropriate manner to meet their needs and the needs of their clients.

Dissemination of Good practice

The project will be holding a dissemination event, which will also include a presentation ceremony, for those achieving an AQA unit, including Volunteers and staff of the Voluntary and Community Sector, who achieved their own Learn to Teach Accreditation. Several talks have been given to various groups across Lancashire on the project. Information on the project has also been passed to the Home Office Active Communities Unit, The Regional manager of the UK on line centres, Community forums/networks etc. The dissemination event will include invites to relevant stakeholders funders, councils, other LSC's across the UK including ELWA Wales, NWDA, GONW, etc. It is hoped that the local TV Station Granada, will send reporters, and local Radio Stations and other Media groups/newspapers etc will be invited, as well as representatives for local and national Voluntary and Community groups. The project has developed a website, which will be available on the internet for people to access information, including the details of AQA units written, and the Evaluation report.

The partners are all members of various forums/networks, and all have participated in disseminating the project activities to these groups, through their own publications/conferences/meetings etc.

Publicity

In the main, publicity activities, have been in the form of delivering awareness sessions to various networks, ie LACLA events, Preston Learning Together Partnership meetings/events etc. a copy of the leaflet produced is included at appendix 3. We did however, have to curb our publicity, as after a short time, we already had too many groups wishing to participate, in relation to our targets and funding.

Case Studies/Photographs.

A case study is attached at appendix 4. We are still awaiting copies of photographs etc from the groups participating, however these will be in the final published document, to be provided to attendees at the dissemination event, where guests will also be able to view exhibition stands from some of the groups containing examples of progress files, AQA files, and photographic evidence etc.

Views of Customers/Partners

Evaluation forms are attached from some of the staff/volunteers participating in the project. Quotes from beneficiaries, partners, and other interested parties, are still being collated ready for the document to be published for the event. This is one of the lessons learnt mentioned above, re collecting this type of information throughout the project!!

Sustainability

Exit Strategy

As part of the project, the partnership will develop an agency/partnership approach with the college, in order to ensure that mainstream funding and full cost recovery courses can be delivered long term by the voluntary and community sector, thereby sustaining learning to communities in the future. The capacity building of voluntary and community groups will also enable funding to be accessed from other funding bodies, particularly as a result of the groups being able to provide evidence of outcomes. As a partnership the partners will also gain a wider access to funding streams.

The above is the exit strategy taken from our proposal. The project is still working towards accessing mainstream funds for the delivery of learning, now accredited by AQA. Our original plan was to assess the viability of the Voluntary and community network of providers, accessing, as a consortia, mainstream funds possibly through colleges, as a franchise. We have been in discussions with the LSC with regard to whether this is a viable option, in light of the fact that the learning would be classed as 'other provision'. It has been suggested that there may be other ways in which to access mainstream funds, ie LEA Adult and Community Learning funding.

We have however, been informed that our recent bid for additional LSC co-finance funding has been approved, pending contract negotiations, this will enable us to continue the project, whilst further assessing the best options in relation to mainstream funding. We also support where possible, individual groups, in accessing 'other' sources of funding for the learning activities, particularly where groups have accessed our support, but wish to develop further AQA units for additional clients. This is made much easier for the groups, as they are able to include in the bid, that their outcomes, can be recognized and accredited.

Sustainability

Protecting the environment - the project will encourage the use of ICT, email, internet etc in order to reduce paper wastage. Courses will be delivered locally in order to reduce the

need for travel to venues. Courses involving practical outdoor activities will include elements relating to natural resources and environmental protection.

The project has been developed with partners who understand the needs of their particular target groups, thereby ensuring that everyone's needs are met. The programme has been designed to develop individuals, and encourage a learning culture within those not currently involved in learning. Therefore it is the aim of the project to encourage these individuals to progress into learning and employment.

The project also encourages the economic growth of the voluntary and community sectors through the enhancement of their provision leading to sustainable income. The project will also encourage the development of these sectors into SME businesses.

The above is the statement from our initial proposal. We have encouraged the use of ICT, in fact a number of the courses involved an element of IT.

Partners have communicated throughout the project via email where possible. All courses, including the Capacity Building training, has been delivered in the local Voluntary and Community centers, reducing the need to travel.

Outdoor activities, have included where feasible, elements of environmental practices. The project has worked individually with groups in order to ensure their needs are met, as well as the needs of their individual clients rather than prescribing a blanket approach.

As will be seen from the case studies, and the number of additional units achieved by clients, of the voluntary and Community sectors, many individuals, have progressed onto further learning, and are now able through using the progress file system, to take control of managing their own learning, and rather than being encouraged or cajoled into learning they are asking for it themselves, which for many, is a huge achievement.

As a result of the groups now being able to evidence their outcomes, in a more structural manner, they are able to provide potential future funders with achievable recognized, evidenced outcomes. So although we have not yet identified the best solution with regard to accessing mainstream funds, long term, the groups are able to access other sources of funding much more easily than in the past.

We still aim over the lifetime of the second stage of the project, to develop a solution for accessing mainstream funding through contracts etc, thereby reducing grant dependency. The second stage of the project, also includes an additional element, in that we have included the piloting of the new VSNTTO standards, which will provide Voluntary and Community groups with additional capacity building in relation to Management techniques, managing volunteers, and Fundraising activities. This will provide groups with additional skills needed to manage their organization as a business.

Information Communication Technology

The programmes will be delivered using ICT methods where applicable. All beneficiaries will undergo ICT training as part of their programmes. The project also provides the course materials online, which will encourage the use of ICT/whiteboards as part of delivery methods.

25 beneficiaries will receive ICT training, 10 community and voluntary groups will receive ICT training with regard to including ICT as a delivery method, as well as a communication tool.

As described in the excerpt taken from our proposal, we have encouraged groups to include elements of IT in their provision. The target of 25 individuals achieving an ICT qualification was achieved.

The 'Learn to Teach' programme included information regarding the different techniques used for training delivery, including ICT/Whiteboards etc. All 10 groups participated in the Learn to Teach programme.

Equal Opportunities

The project will through its evaluation and monitoring procedures monitor the accessibility of the programme to men and women, older people, ethnic minorities, disabled people and other excluded groups.

The programme will target these groups by using the voluntary and community sector organisations who target these groups as part of their provision already. The necessary equipment and accessibility requirements will be met by all providers.

As described above, the project has worked with Voluntary and Community groups, whose clients primarily come from the disadvantaged groups.

Our beneficiary forms captured data on each individual, in relation to disability, gender, length of time since they were last in learning, current qualifications, and employment status. A number of our beneficiary, had mental or physical disabilities, and many were from ethnic groups.

As the groups currently work with these target groups, relevant equipment and accessibility requirements were provided, and therefore, equal opportunities, accessibility, or availability of equipment has not been an issue, including the need at one point for us to provide for a number of blind dogs, being together in the same room!!

Additional information requested

1. Fit with local initiatives

Our project was fortunate in that it has the ability to provide the Voluntary and Community groups with evidence of their achievements. Therefore, the project has proved invaluable in being able to provide evidence of the 'fit' with LSC learning targets, widening participation targets, Local neighbourhood renewal targets, in relation to learning, LSP floor targets and LSP learning thematic working group targets in relation to inclusiveness, and participation in learning.

Local partners included in running or developing the project, includes, Blackburn council community team, LACLA, Preston learning together partnership, Clitheroe community group, and the LSC in relation to their involvement on the Partnership Teams board. Primarily, our project, provided the Voluntary and Community group themselves, to

develop the activities, in a way which met their individual needs, therefore, the project has been extremely flexible in responding to the groups needs and the needs of their clients, whilst helping to achieve both national, regional and local learning targets.

2. Capacity building activities.

As outlined above, this project was primarily concerned with building the capacity of the Voluntary and Community sectors. The impact of this has been that these groups, are now able to deliver their 'activities' in a more structured manner, in order for them to be able to provide evidence of outcomes, achievements and progression, thereby long term, providing them with additional proof necessary to access mainstream funding.

3. Soft Outcomes

The project was able to evidence soft outcomes, as many of the AQA units, include soft outcomes as part of the progression/achievements gained. The DfES Progress File, is an excellent tool for the evidencing of soft outcomes/distance traveled.

The beneficiaries use the progress file to identify their current abilities in relation to analytical skills, personal skills, organizational skills, and interpersonal skills.

They then use the progress file activities in the booklets to assess their abilities against the relevant skills, at the end of their training, to provide themselves and others with evidence of achievement and progression.

Unfortunately we have not statistically measured this evidence, therefore statistics are not available. This could be very time consuming to undertake, but there is potential for this to be undertaken as part of a separate activity/project.