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An e-learning solution for NSW ACE providers

Organisation Profile and Objective: Central West Community College

The Central West Community College (CWCC) Adult and Community Education (ACE) organisation in rural New South Wales (NSW) this year struck a major deal to provide other ACE NSW organisations with affordable access to technology.



Sandra Gray, Central West Community College Senior Manager of Education and Training

CWCC is a multi-campus ACE provider which offers adult and community education, employment, training and advocacy services.

CWCC is the largest education and employment services provider in the central west of NSW. Last year, nearly 30,000 people accessed a CWCC program or service, representing about 20% of the adult population of the area.

Like many other ACE providers, CWCC could not afford to independently establish its own Learning Management System (LMS).

On average, an LMS costs approximately US\$550,000 for 8,000 clients over five years. The CWCC successfully negotiated with 'Learning Seat', an e-learning company specialising in providing web-based training management applications, courseware and services, to provide NSW ACE organisations with affordable access to an existing LMS.

Getting there – the Framework connection

CWCC Senior Manager of Education and Training, Sandra Gray, said the new arrangement gave ACE providers access to an LMS that benefits adult learners by giving them access to training 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"We negotiated with Learning Seat to secure an arrangement where all NSW ACE providers can now have affordable access to an LMS, as well as a range of other learning technologies," she said. "Being able to tap into an existing LMS rather than developing our own has saved us a huge amount of time and money and while the LMS remains the property of Learning Seat, it carries our own branding, which is great."

The LMS is capable of providing ACE organisations with an entire new platform for an online learning environment, allowing trainers to manage, deliver and track both online and face-to-face training. To date, six of the State's more than 50 ACE providers have taken advantage of the opportunity.

"Having this new technology definitely provides us with a competitive edge because it gives us the chance to be much more flexible in the way we deliver our training for individual adult learners as well as for industry," Sandra said.

In 2003 Sandra received funding and support from the Australian Flexible Learning Framework's (Framework) Flexible Learning Leaders project for professional development support to develop the skills and knowledge she needed to develop an e-business and e-learning platform for CWCC.

The Framework was established in 2000 to support the vocational and educational training (VET) system to meet the rapidly increasing demand for flexible learning, including e-learning, from industry, enterprise and clients.

As a result of her professional development, Sandra has played a key role in developing and implementing strategies to support sustainable e-learning not only within her own organisation but for other ACE providers.

Today CWCC offers 260 courses online in a range of areas including occupational health and safety, project management, information technology, risk management and business writing.

The College is also investigating developing new online courses with Learning Seat that are specifically designed for the meat and food processing industry.

"We are working to enhance our existing partnerships with industry by offering online learning," Sandra said. "There is a strong training need from industry in this area and we now have the capacity to offer them training options that are flexible and meet their particular needs."

In 2004 Sandra and her CWCC colleagues are being funded and supported through LearnScope, the Framework's team-based professional development project, to further develop user-friendly online training for clients including large industry groups, local government and people with disadvantages.

"At CWCC we would have been lost without the Framework and the professional development and networking opportunities it has provided us with," Sandra said.

The end result

NSW ACE organisations now have the opportunity to access an e-learning platform at a fraction of the cost an individual provider would face in developing their own LMS.

"Training providers don't need to have any hardware or software to be able to offer the online delivery of training through Learning Seat's platform," Sandra said.

Through the Learning Seat e-learning platform ACE providers can create a web presence for the first time or link seamlessly to existing websites.

Learning Seat have worked in partnership with six NSW training providers to integrate their learning materials and information with Learning Seat's multimedia courseware to create an online environment using each ACE provider's own corporate branding.

The LMS platform allows students to download reference material and carry out assessment activities online. Training providers can track students' progress online, send automatic email reminders and automatically issue completion certificates.

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