

AUSTRALIAN *FLEXIBLE LEARNING* FRAMEWORK

Managed by the Flexible Learning Advisory Group on behalf of all States and Territories in conjunction with ANTA

2002 RTO Case Study Project 'Flexible learning in practice'

Adelaide Institute of TAFE



'Successful flexible learning strategies'

29 November 2002

RTO Case Study Foreword

The following case study is one of 18 case studies that document the use and application of Australian Flexible Learning (AFL) Framework products and services by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). The case studies are an initiative of the AFL Framework for the National Vocational Education and Training System 2000 – 2004 as a means of offering 'real-life' examples of how RTOs are implementing elearning strategies with the assistance of AFL Framework products and services. Each participating RTO has documented their experiences over a six month period (June 2002 to November 2002) and have been selected from each State and Territory representing the TAFE, Private Provider, Enterprise and VET in Schools sectors.

Each case study will provide you with an insight into how RTOs are implementing flexible learning and is critical reading if:

- You are interested in finding out about the possibilities of flexible learning
- You are currently implementing flexible learning within your organisation
- You are looking to extend your flexible learning delivery capabilities

Each case study covers areas such as;

- How to implement AFL Framework products and services
- Change management practices
- Customisation of flexible learning products and services
- Professional development
- Access and equity considerations
- Flexible learning strategic planning
- Blended learning techniques
- Marketing and much more.

Each case study highlights the various ways in which AFL Framework products and services can be applied to the learning environment to enhance client delivery and service.

For further information pertaining to AFL Framework products and services or to access other case studies visit discover.flexiblelearning.net.au or phone 07 3234 1852.

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Case Study Summary

Adelaide Institute of TAFE (AIT), located in the Adelaide central business district, delivers nationally accredited educational programs from Certificate to Post Graduate level. As a UNESCO Centre of Excellence in technical and vocational education, it has an international reputation for the quality, responsiveness and flexibility of its delivery.

AIT is currently acknowledged nationally and internationally as a leader in elearning and innovative flexible delivery. It is committed to being able to provide students with innovative and flexible learning materials. The fact that AIT has been using many Australian Flexible Learning (AFL) Framework products and services for the past few years is an indication of this commitment. The following AFL Framework products and services have been used at AIT and are examined in this case study:

- FlexWays
- Flexible Learning Leaders
- Toolboxes
- LearnScope
- Impact of Clicks on Bricks

There are two main objectives of this case study. Firstly, we need to know whether or not the use of the AFL Framework products and services by AIT staff has increased our ability to offer students new, innovative and flexible learning options. Secondly, we need to identify ways to support staff in their use of the AFL Framework products and services so that they can be used effectively.

As AIT had been using many of the AFL Framework products and services over the past few years, it was meaningless to implement another product or services for this case study. Instead, it was decided that the best and most appropriate way to evaluate the use of the AFL Framework products and services was by questionnaire and direct interviewing with the users of the products and services.

Results from the interviews and questionnaires strongly indicated that the use of the AFL Framework products and services have supported our Institute priorities by providing professional development opportunities for staff in flexible delivery and elearning methodologies; increasing numbers of staff thinking and acting creatively; developing new, innovative and flexible ways of delivering training; and increasing access by students to elearning options.

The following were also identified as ways in which an organisation can support staff in the effective use of the AFL Framework products and services:

- Actively promote the AFL Framework products and services within your organisation
- Highlight the wider benefits of using the AFL Framework products and services
- Support people in the initial stages
- Induct the participants
- Be prepared to provide support throughout the entire length of the project
- Work within a timeframe
- If possible, organise backfill for staff involved in projects
- Provide opportunities for people to develop their skills further

The AFL Framework products and services implemented at AIT have all added enormous value to our organisation by providing funds to enable staff to be released from normal teaching duties and participate in new, rewarding and engaging professional development activities; providing resources that enhance current teaching practices; assisting in fostering innovation and promoting flexible learning; and continually profiling and raising the importance of flexible learning.

In addition to this report, a website has been developed that highlights the use of AFL Framework products and services at AIT. To access the website go to: http://gs0100:2002@143.92.1.65:8900/SCRIPT/CSP01A/scripts/serve_home

1.0 Introduction - Flexible learning background

1.1 Organisation Overview

TAFE SA is a government funded and supported training system comprising eight independently managed Institutes. Although all Institutes deliver a comprehensive range of courses, each specialises in particular vocational or educational fields. Institutes collaborate on state, national and international projects where appropriate, yet each also has the infrastructure to design and deliver high quality, customised training in their own right.

Adelaide Institute of TAFE (AIT), located in the heart of Adelaide city, is a UNESCO Centre of Excellence in technical and vocational education. Only one of two such centres in the world, AIT has forged an international reputation for the quality, responsiveness and flexibility of its delivery.

The Institute delivers a comprehensive range of nationally accredited educational programs from Certificate to Post Graduate level. Over 16,000 students are enrolled annually. AIT provides over 30 different courses which include English Language courses (ELICOS), beauty therapy courses, business courses including accounting, banking and finance, marketing programs, information technology (computing) courses, tourism courses, music degrees, interpreting and translating courses and many more. Many of the courses offered by AIT provide up to 1-2 years credit to university.

Courses at AIT are delivered using innovative flexible learning methodologies, ensuring that students have access to the best possible training available.

The wide range of study options includes:

- campus-based attendance
- on-the-job training
- external/distance
- online
- flexible combinations of class attendance and other modes of study

1.2 Background to Organisations Flexible Learning Capability

AIT is currently acknowledged nationally and internationally as a 'first mover' and leader in elearning and innovative flexible delivery. In 2001 it was decided to establish a specialist elearning unit within AIT called **adelaide/global**. The aim of this unit is to meet the professional and continuing education needs of the wide range of educators involved in different educational settings and sectors within AIT. The unit focuses specifically on the area of elearning and the incorporation of elearning into the educational environment. **adelaide/global** has strong support from the Institute Council and AIT management.

The broad objects of **adelaideiglobal** are to:

- create a viable elearning business
- provide professional development and new work opportunities for AIT staff
- foster innovation and an elearning culture across the Institute
- foster the development of AIT as an e-business organisation

adelaideiglobal is led by a team of three innovative and creative elearning professionals – one Business Manager and two eLearning Consultants. All have extensive experience in the development, design, delivery and implementation of elearning programs to a wide range of organisations.



In particular, **adelaideiglobal** team members have:

- educational qualifications
- held State and National positions related to elearning policy, development strategic management and professional development
- managed, coordinated, developed and delivered a diverse range of elearning course material
- experience in working with government agencies, industry bodies and educational institutions
- experience in international markets
- received international recognition for demonstrating best practises in the development and delivery of elearning programs
- WebCT Trainer certification
- extensive involvement in presenting at quality elearning conferences.

Additional AIT staff members are brought into the team on an as needs basis. These staff members may be involved in the provision of professional development activities to AIT staff, the writing of elearning content, the conversion of existing face-to-face content into content suitable for elearning, or the development of an elearning site. AIT staff members who come into the team on a short-term basis are supported by the two eLearning Consultants to develop new skills in the development and delivery of elearning material. They are encouraged to use these newly acquired skills to implement elearning programs within their work teams.

The office area of **adelaideiglobal**, known as the eLounge, was designed by an external design agency. Their brief was to design an office that was modern, paperless, technologically innovative, adaptable and inviting to staff members. The eLounge is strategically placed in that it is highly visible to both staff and students. It consists of 3 workstations for the **adelaideiglobal** staff members plus an additional 4 smaller workstations that can be removed with



all network cables disconnected from the ceiling, leaving a large area for presentations. These smaller workstations are for the use of AIT staff members who wish to use the eLounge facilities to develop elearning materials. All workstations have been ergonomically designed, all having flat screen monitors, cordless keyboards and mice.

adelaideiglobal has developed a comprehensive elearning professional development program for staff at AIT. All professional development activities are free to AIT staff members and are advertised through the AIT intranet site, emails, brochures and word of mouth. In designing the structure of the professional development program, staff needs and existing work commitments were considered. Staff select from a variety of professional development activities including:

- Hands-on workshops. These are 3-hour workshops conducted once per week for four weeks. Staff members have the opportunity to attend all workshops or select ones specific to their needs. These are introductory elearning skills, designing elearning content, and online assessment. Additional one-week workshops are conducted on facilitation skills, online student management and Toolboxes.
- tak-E-ways. These are lunchtime training sessions conducted in the eLounge. Topics covered include creating an effective course homepage, organising elearning content, adding multimedia to quizzes, using the CD ROM tool in an online subject, organising your computer filing system, and many more.
- Customised workshops for specific work teams wishing to explore elearning in relation to their own work environment.
- Online modules offered through Online Education Services, a TAFE SA state wide elearning unit who have developed a series of six online modules ranging from introductory to advanced elearning skills.

All staff members who register for any form of elearning professional development activity are added to an eLearning email list. They are given access to the 'AIG Professional Development Resources for using WebCT', an online elearning resource site. They also receive relevant information about professional development opportunities. Staff members who complete professional development activities are recognised at a 'graduation ceremony' and are presented with a framed 'Statement of Recognition'.



adelaideiglobal has also developed an eLearning Network within the Institute. This network is comprised of a representative from every teaching and meetings are held once per term. The aims of the network are to:

- Share information and news about what is happening with elearning at AIT
- Support each other in our work of elearning
- Provide feedback and suggestions on professional development initiatives
- Provide a forum for discussion on relevant issues.

The establishment and support of **adelaideiglobal** by management and staff highlights AIT's commitment to being able to provide students with innovative and flexible learning materials. The fact that AIT has been using several AFL Framework products and services for the past few years is also an indication of this commitment. **adelaideiglobal** support AIT staff members in the use of the following AFL Framework products and services:

FlexWays

FlexWays is a web-based resource to assist Vocational Education and Training (VET) teachers and trainers to:

- *Identify their professional development needs in the area of learning technologies and flexible learning*
- *Develop a professional development plan to meet those needs*
- *Access nationally developed resources for flexible learning*

FlexWays includes:

- *A checklist of relevant skills that can be used by teachers and trainers working independently or in a facilitated group to self-audit their skills*
- *A template for developing personalised professional development plan*
- *Background information on flexible learning approaches and professional development strategies*
Guided access to resources available, in particular those which have been developed nationally
- *A series of workshops to introduce and explain FlexWays will be held in capital cities and regional centres.*

[<http://flexways.flexiblelearning.net.au/index.jsp>]

Flexible Learning Leaders

Flexible Learning Leaders is the professional development program that provides development opportunities for VET managers, leaders or champions in order to increase their effectiveness in implementing flexible learning.

Flexible Learning Leaders can be senior or middle managers, or VET practitioners with a track record in flexible learning. They come from a range of organisations that exert an influence on VET e.g. Registered Training Organisations, State Training Authorities, Industry Training Advisory Bodies.

[<http://flexiblelearning.net.au/leaders/>]

Toolboxes

A toolbox is a collection of online training materials comprising learning activities, resources and user guides to support program delivery for endorsed Training Package qualifications. These learning materials that can be installed on a server by an RTO and used to deliver training online.

Toolboxes focus upon effective teaching and learning activities and support a central role for teachers and trainers, who can adapt and contextualise the materials for their own audiences.

[<http://flexiblelearning.net.au/toolbox/>]

LearnScope

LearnScope 2002 aims to inform, encourage and support the vocational education and training (VET) sector in assisting to build a critical mass of VET people with the attitudes, skills and capabilities to applying new learning technologies to the delivery of services and products. The outcome being that Registered Training Organisations are better placed to meet the needs of their individual and enterprise clients.

[<http://learnscope.flexiblelearning.net.au>]

Impact of Clicks on Bricks

The Impact of Clicks on Bricks project has resulted in three major documents:

1. "Principles for VET facilities planning in an information age" - a review of available literature and sources on the subject of impact of new information and communication technologies on physical VET infrastructure
2. "Principles and Guidelines for the Best Practice Incorporation of New Learning Technologies in the Physical Facilities of VET" - a report resulting from the Clicks on Bricks search conferences and literature search and review
3. "VET facilities planning in an information age" - final report on the on the subject of impact of new information and communication technologies on physical VET infrastructure

[<http://flexiblelearning.net.au/clicks/index.htm>]

1.3 Case Study Objectives

At the conclusion of each AFL Framework project an evaluation is conducted and a report is submitted to the relevant AFL Framework authority. For example, each LearnScope Project Manager is required to submit a final report about the outcomes of their individual LearnScope project. This report is submitted to the State LearnScope Manager at the completion of the LearnScope project.

Although this is positive and a definite necessity, each project tends to be evaluated in isolation. At no time in the past has AIT evaluated the combined use of the AFL Framework products and services and the impact of this use on the Institutes capability to deliver innovative flexible learning options.

Generally, we need to know whether or not the use of the AFL Framework products and services by AIT staff has increased our ability to offer students new, innovative and flexible learning options. We also need to know how to support staff in their use of the AFL Framework products and services so that they can be used effectively.

In considering this, there are two main objectives of this case study:

- Evaluate the impact of the AFL Framework products and services on the Institute's ability to deliver innovative and flexible education – examining the Big Picture
- Identify ways in which the organisation can support and enhance the implementation and use of the AFL Framework products and services within the organisation – getting the most out of the AFL Framework products and services

2.0 Selecting the right AFL Framework products and services

2.1 AFL Framework Products and Services in Use at AIT

AIT has been using many of the AFL Framework products and services over the past few years. In order to encourage staff to use these products and services, AIT has developed a culture in which the AFL Framework products and services are promoted and supported across the Institute.

2.1.1 FlexWays

The use of the FlexWays resource site has been promoted and supported across AIT through the following processes:

- As a resource for LearnScope projects
- Showcasing FlexWays in professional development workshops
- Establishing a link to the FlexWays website from the Institute's intranet
- Promotion of FlexWays through the Institute eLearning Network
- Distribution of information about FlexWays via Email lists and brochures

"I was impressed by the amount of relevant resources on the FlexWays site."

AIT FlexWays user

"I found the FlexWays site helpful when completing my application for Flexible Learning Leaders funding." AIT Flexible Learning Leader

2.1.2 Flexible Learning Leaders

Currently each Registered Training Organisation (RTO) can nominate only one person for Flexible Learning Leaders funding in a year. This means that each RTO needs to have selection criteria and a process in place to ensure that an appropriate nominee is selected from within their organisation.

In order to make it equitable for all staff within AIT, a process has been established that enables all staff to have the opportunity to apply for Flexible Learning Leaders and be the AIT nominee. This process starts with an expression of interest document that is emailed out to all staff. This document outlines key areas and criteria that staff need to address. These key areas are aligned with the Institute's existing and future priorities on flexible delivery.

A selection panel determines the AIT nominee from the received expressions of interest. The successful applicant is strongly supported by management and skilled staff in preparing their final application.

AIT supported a Flexible Learning Leader in 2001 and is currently supporting another in 2002.

2001	Margaret Barron	Project: to develop skills in teaching Interagency Collaborative Practice online.
2002	Kate Fannon	Project: to investigate the design and implementation of collaborative, task-based learning and role-plays in an online and/or hybrid environment for learners of English as a Second Language.

Throughout the duration of their Flexible Learning Leader scholarship, both have received support from the Institute in terms of financial, time release

from work duties, and mentor support. Both Flexible Learning Leaders are continually involved and promoted within the organisation by:

- Involvement in/on other National Projects and Committees
- Presenting at conferences and workshops
- Presenting to colleagues and management

"My involvement in the Flexible Learning Leaders program has significantly influenced the work I am currently doing - the majority of my work time is now spent developing the work that I started on the Flexible Learning Leaders program." AIT 2001 Flexible Learning Leader

"The Flexible Learning Leaders program is a professional development opportunity that comes along once in a person's career, I would encourage any other people working in the Flexible Learning area to apply." AIT 2002 Flexible Learning Leader

2.1.3 Toolboxes

Several workgroups across AIT are involved in implementing Toolboxes into their workgroups. In particular, the Information Technology Unit received funding to trial the Series 3 toolbox, *Network Engineering*. The Information Technology Unit also won a 2001 LearnScope project which focused on looking at the IT toolboxes and as a result have implemented components of these into their teaching program.

The Aboriginal Education Unit has also been successful in receiving funding to trial the *Youth Work* Toolbox, a Series 3 toolbox. The Hair & Beauty team are also implementing the *Retail* Toolbox into their teaching program this year.

AIT has staff with skills in the area of web development and design. These people are available to discuss strategies and assist in the promotion and implementation of toolboxes.

"I saw a need to use the Toolboxes - it has allowed me to use high quality, professionally developed resources at little cost to my work group. There is no way I would have been able to produce something of similar quality!" Toolbox user

"I think that the students have benefited by having improved resources and more exposure to using online technology." Toolbox user

"I need to go this way for the future as I don't want to be left behind!" Toolbox user

2.1.4 LearnScope

AIT has been a successful recipient of several LearnScope projects, all of which have had an enormous impact on skilling staff and raising the exposure of using new technologies to deliver more innovative and flexible learning materials.

The opportunity for LearnScope funding is heavily promoted across AIT. Staff are encouraged to seek out collaborative opportunities with other workgroups/organisations and to attend information sessions. Internal workshops sessions are held by **adelaideiglobal** at the beginning of the year with the view to supporting, encouraging discussion and promoting new and innovative ideas for a project.

"Being involved in a LearnScope project has given me the opportunity to develop a wide variety of skills including facilitation skills, communication skills, understanding where people are coming from in terms of the technologies, additional reporting skills, technical skills, and project management skills."
LearnScope Project Manager

"LearnScope gave us the opportunity to network, be part of a creative team and also see what other people throughout Australia are doing in the area of flexible delivery." LearnScope participant

"It was a luxury to be able to devote time discussing and exploring issues related to flexible delivery." LearnScope participant

"At last! Being involved in a LearnScope project got the whole team on the same wavelength!" LearnScope project facilitator

2.1.5 Impact of Click on Bricks

AIT is currently examining the existing environment it provides for both students and staff and is in the process of establishing a plan that will enable more flexible learning spaces for both students and staff to work within. AIT has identified that in order to encourage the uptake of flexible delivery across the organisation, it is imperative that the learning and working spaces provided to students and staff reflect these practises.

A working party is being established to develop both a short term and long term plan. All staff across the organisation will be consulted and informed of the process and objectives. The working party will commence the process by referring to the final report outlined in the "Impacts of Clicks on Bricks" Project and other related reports such as the case studies and "Best Practice and Principle and Guidelines".

In designing the eLounge (refer to 1.2) the two documents "Principles and Guidelines for the Best Practice Incorporation of New Learning Technologies in the Physical Facilities of VET" and "VET facilities planning in an information age" were referred to. Providing a quiet uninterrupted area in a supported environment has been well received by AIT staff. The workspace has been designed to be totally flexible; it can be converted quite quickly into a presentation area, training room, meeting space or a simple work environment.

The concept behind the eLounge is that it provides a model for work groups to refer or to get ideas from when they are planning future workspaces. It is anticipated that this will encourage staff to adopt these new practices and hopefully keep ahead of the changing nature of educational programs.

"In setting up adelaideiglobal, it has been necessary to identify the changing physical nature of work spaces for staff and students. The Impact on Clicks and Bricks report has been most useful in stimulating new ideas and providing strategies and processes that need to be taken into consideration." Deb Bennett, adelaideiglobal Business Manager

2.2 How to Evaluate the Use of these AFL Framework Products and Services?

It was decided that the best and most appropriate way to evaluate the use of the AFL Framework products and services was by questionnaire and direct interviewing with the users of the products and services. A questionnaire specific to each product or service was developed with the assistance of

project team members who are recognised within AIT as having expertise in the area of online technologies and flexible delivery. Project team members were also selected for their previous experience and involvement with specific AFL Framework products and services. These team members included:

- Catriona Ward - eLearning Consultant, adelaideiglobal, AIT. Project Officer for the RTO case Study
- Rita Bennink – eLearning Consultant, adelaideiglobal, AIT. AFL Framework product or service: FlexWays
- Margaret Barron – Lecturer, Justice Department, AFL Framework product or service: Flexible Learning Leaders
- Kate Fannon – Lecturer, English Language Services, AIT. AFL Framework product or service: Flexible Learning Leaders
- Doug Purcell – Lecturer, Workplace Education Services, AIT. Online Professional Development Officer, Online Education Services, TAFE SA. AFL Framework product or service: Toolboxes
- Liz Pohl – Online Training Coordinator, Online Education Services, TAFE SA. AFL Framework product or service: LearnScope
- Deb Bennett – Business Manager, adelaideiglobal, AIT. AFL Framework product or service: Impact of Click on Bricks

Questions in each questionnaire were specifically related to:

- Finding out about the AFL Framework product or service
- Reasons for using the AFL Framework product or service
- Level and type of support required to apply for funding to use the AFL Framework product or service
- Other AFL Framework products and services used to support the applicant in their application for funding
- Types of support offered by the Institute in implementing the AFL Framework product or service
- Types of skills developed in using the AFL Framework product or service
- Opportunities to develop these skills further after the use of the AFL Framework product or service
- Costs incurred by the work team in using the AFL Framework product or service
- Benefits to the individual, the work team, the Institute, external organisations and the student in using the AFL Framework product or service
- Factors that contributed to the successful use of the AFL Framework product or service
- Factors that hindered the use of the AFL Framework product or service
- Whether or not the use of the AFL Framework product or service has increased the Institute's capacity to deliver new and innovative ways of learning

It was important to modify and customise the questions so they suited each of the different AFL Framework products and services. Additional questions were included that were specific to each AFL Framework product or service. See Appendix 2 for a sample questionnaire.

Questionnaires were distributed to appropriate AIT staff members in various ways. As the participants of previous LearnScope projects and the two Flexible Learning Leaders were known, the distribution of these questionnaires was relatively easy. Questionnaires for these two AFL Framework products and services were distributed via email (see appendix

1). Staff members had the option of completing the questionnaire online and returning in via email or printing the questionnaire and returning it via internal mail.

The users of Toolboxes and FlexWays were to some degree unknown as staff may have been using these products without much assistance. The easiest way to find out who was using Toolboxes or FlexWays within the Institute was to send out a general email to all AIT staff members informing them of the case study and the need to gather data from people who have been or were currently using Toolboxes or FlexWays.

3.0 Putting flexible learning into practice with AFL Framework products and services

The opportunity to evaluate the use of the AFL Framework products and services at AIT also enabled us to evaluate how they have assisted us with our organisational goals.

One of the AIT's goals in the Strategic Plan 2002-2004 states that AIT is to be recognised as a *vibrant, high-performing and innovative learning organisation*. Strategies to achieve this are indicated as:

- Develop new, innovative and flexible ways of delivering training, giving high priority to interesting new technologies and associated pedagogy into the creation, design and delivery of curricula
- Encourage staff to embrace life-long learning by continually developing their skills, knowledge and resources

The use of the AFL Framework products and services have supported our Institute priorities for 2002 by:

- providing professional development for staff in flexible delivery and elearning methodologies
- developing new, innovative and flexible ways of delivering training
- increasing numbers of staff thinking and acting creatively
- increasing access by students to elearning options, leading to enriched learning experiences
- maintaining and further developing superb campus-based and flexible, online teaching and learning environments and support services

The AFL Framework products and services implemented at AIT have all added enormous value to our organisation. It has done this by:

- enabling staff to participate in new, rewarding and engaging activities
- assisting in fostering innovation and promoting flexible learning
- providing funds to enable staff to be released from normal teaching duties
- providing resources that enhance current teaching practices
- continually profiling and raising the importance of flexible learning

4.0 How to get the most out of AFL Framework products and services

Results from the interviews and questionnaires yielded a lot of valuable information. Users were asked to indicate factors that contributed to the successful use of the AFL Framework products and services. Responses included the following:

- Experience in tender and report writing

- Good project management skills
- Good induction into the use of the AFL Framework product or service
- Creative people giving freely of their time to be involved
- Motivation of participants to achieve goals
- Staff prepared to learn new skills and use them within their work group
- Sharing the load with regards to project management and facilitation by having co-facilitators and co-managers
- A willingness of both Institute management and staff to commit time, finances and energy to the projects
- Making time for people to be involved
- Close relationship between team members, project manager and project facilitator
- Get together
- Realistic budget
- Close monitoring
- Efficient and friendly communication with specific AFL Framework staff members (e.g. Flexible Learning Leaders management team)
- Good mentors who are always willing to talk and help if needed
- Support from Information Technology personnel when needed
- Student interest and willingness to use flexible learning materials

From these factors we have identified the following ways in which an organisation can support staff in the effective use of the AFL Framework products and services:

- Actively promote the AFL Framework products and services within your organisation
- Highlight the wider benefits of using the AFL Framework products and services
- Support people in the initial stages
- Induct the participants
- Be prepared to provide support throughout the entire length of the project
- Work within a timeframe
- If possible, organise backfill for staff involved in projects
- Provide opportunities for people to develop their skills further

4.1 Actively Promote the AFL Framework Products and Services within your Organisation

Many of the users initially found out about their particular AFL Framework product or service by information received from their colleagues, work group or certain individuals within the organisation.

This may be due to the fact that AIT has been using the AFL Framework products and services for several years and in doing so has established a culture in which staff members are encouraged to share information regarding previous projects. Part of the role of staff members working within **adelaide/global** is to disseminate information about project opportunities to staff on a regular basis. Information about the *flexiblelearning.net.au* website is also sent out to all AIT staff members, giving them access to additional information about the AFL Framework products and services.

It is important that organisations establish a system that promotes the use of AFL Framework products and services. Ideally, information about the AFL Framework products and services is distributed through a central person/group, for example, the coordinator for staff professional development activities within the organisation.

This information needs to be dispersed to people at all levels within the organisation using a variety of means to distribute the information. For example, as not all people may have access to email (or read their email), methods of distribution other than email also need to be considered. These methods can include:

- information sessions
- poster sessions
- lunchtime showcases of previous projects
- meeting with individual work groups
- and distribution of pamphlets.

Once people have received the information, they need to be able to have access to a person within their organisation if they require additional information.

4.2 Highlight the Wider Benefits of Using the AFL Framework Products and Services

People like to make informed choices, especially when committing valuable time or money to be involved in a project. Questions such as “What’s in this for me?”, “How will this change what I am already doing?”, “Will this make my life any easier?” and “Will this benefit my students?” are often asked. It is important to make people aware of the benefits in using the AFL Framework products and services.

These benefits relate not only to them as individuals but also to their work group, the organisation, any external organisation that they may have working relationships with, and the student.

Participants in this case study identified the following benefits to the individual:

- increase of specific skills
- greater independence and increase in confidence in using technology
- networking (state, national and international)
- being part of a creative and innovative group
- being able to see what other people are doing
- having the luxury of some time to discuss and explore some issues
- chance to devote all attention to one project
- chance to explore / put into practice some of the learning theories and practices read about during studies

Benefits to the work group were identified as:

- networking opportunities
- possibilities of international projects and teaching
- having the same vision and talking the same language
- a feeling of collegiate development
- sharing of skills with the group
- a more skilled group of staff

Benefits to the organisation included

- national exposure
- development of partnerships with other organisations
- development and application of cutting edge technology
- increased collaboration and sharing of resources between work groups
- more skilled staff members
- seen as one of the leading educational institutes in online learning

Benefits to external organisations included:

- increase of communication between organisations
- opportunity to be involved in innovative projects
- ability to have training customised to suit their individual needs
- sharing results with others organisations through involvement in conferences.

Lastly, but by no means least, the benefits to the student were identified as:

- enhanced learning
- being taught by staff with experience and knowledge of latest delivery modes
- more flexible programs
- the incorporation of information technology into more classes
- learning computing skills such as Internet and word processing skills
- better quality learning materials

These benefits need to be communicated to individuals when making choices about using the AFL Framework products and services. By highlighting the benefits not only to the individual but also to the work group, organisation, external organisations and the student will enable people to see the wider advantages of using a particular AFL Framework product or service. It is often being able to see these wider advantages that will sway people into making a positive decision about using a product or service.

Communicating the wider benefits of using AFL Framework products and services can be achieved through email, information sessions, poster sessions, lunchtime showcases, meeting with individuals or work groups, and distribution of pamphlets.

4.3 Support People in the Initial Stages – the Writing of the Application

Some of the AFL Framework products and services require the user to submit an application for funding for their specific project (e.g. LearnScope and Flexible Learning Leaders). Writing an application tends to be the first step and for people new to using these AFL Framework products and services, it is a step down a new and unfamiliar path.

In the past we have found that many people tend to underestimate the time and effort involved in the writing of the initial application for funding. Ultimately, this can cause stress on the part of the applicant, a badly researched and poorly produced application, a late application or interested people giving up and not submitting an application at all.

In answering questions related to the required support during this initial application writing stage, all participants indicated that they required moderate support at this time. The types of support that were listed included talking with someone who had been through the process before, help in finalising project ideas, aligning projects with various state and Institute priorities, working out a budget, writing the application in a specified format, editing of the application, obtaining references and moral support.

Clearly this highlights the importance to support people during the initial stage of application writing/submission. Organisations need to establish a system in which potential users of the AFL Framework products and services can receive support from relevant people. The coordinator for staff professional development activities may be the most appropriate person to coordinate this system. Support can be offered in a variety of ways. Often putting the person

in touch with a mentor, someone who has been through the process before, or work group manager will ease the process.

"It was a big responsibility doing the application for our LearnScope project - I felt I had to get it right or I would be letting everyone down." LearnScope project manager

"I found it extremely valuable talking to people about our LearnScope application. My manager offered me assistance with the budget section and another person gave me ideas on how to align our project aim with the Institute's strategic directions." LearnScope project manager

4.4 Induct the Participants

An induction process is vital in any project. It allows participants to be clear on project outcomes, project structure, required commitment and expectations. The Flexible Learning Leaders program has an extensive induction process in which all participants spend a few days together receiving information that is of value to their involvement in the program. This induction adds to the overall success of the program.

With LearnScope, it is up to individual project managers and facilitators to induct their LearnScope project members. In order to take on an ownership of the project, each member needs to feel involved at every stage of the project. Participants need to receive clear information and have involvement concerning the project outcomes, the structure of workshops, roles and responsibilities of individual project members, and the expected commitment in terms of time and involvement.

We have found that the most successful LearnScope projects are those that have gained the support of all project members right from the commencement of the project.

"I was very clear about our project right from the beginning. I don't think I would have made the decision to be involved if I wasn't clear about what I was getting myself into!" LearnScope participant

4.5 Provide Support throughout the Entire Length of the Project

When asked how AIT had supported them in implementing the AFL Framework products and services, participants in this case study indicated that they had received both financial support and release from work duties. Although many indicated that the financial support and release did not cover the actual costs or time spent involved in the project, all indicated that this support was vital to the success of their project.

Participants using the FlexWays and Toolboxes products indicated that at times during the use of the product they required immediate assistance. When examining how these people were using the products, they tended to allocate certain timeslots or reschedule work duties so that they could have dedicated time to explore and use the FlexWays or Toolboxes products. If they ran into technical difficulties with the use of these products during these allocated times, they would tend to seek out someone to assist them. If they were unable to find help, generally they would have to cease using the product for that time. People found it very frustrating and unproductive if immediate help was not available.

At times AIT staff members involved in the use of an AFL Framework product or service have required additional skills in order to use the product or service

more effectively. For example, one staff member using a Toolbox needed additional training in using WebCT, the elearning platform adopted by TAFE SA, in order to be able to deliver the Toolbox to her students. This staff member was able to join workshops offered through **adelaide/global** to increase her skills in this area. Another staff member involved in a LearnScope project required additional training to increase their online facilitation skills. This staff member was able to participate in an online module offered through Online Education Services.

These above examples highlight the need for support throughout the entire length of the project. This support can be offered in many forms - 1:1 tutoring, mentoring, IT helpdesk support or the option of attending additional workshops. Ideally, a person such as the coordinator for staff professional development activities within the organisation is available to direct the users to appropriate and relevant support. Without this support many people would simply not be able to participate in projects or use the AFL Framework products and services to their full capacity.

"I am also doing some online workshops that are helping me in my use and understanding of the Toolboxes." Toolbox user

4.6 Work within a Timeframe

Funding from AFL Framework products and services such as LearnScope and Flexible Learning Leaders is to be used within an allocated timeframe. When asked if participants found this timeframe useful, all gave a positive response. Many indicated that the timeframe kept them on track and focussed.

To some extent the timeframe forces us to manage our time effectively. However, as is usually the case, time seems to go quicker than we expect and before we know it the final report is due!

Encourage participants to develop a timeline that includes project activities and milestones such as reports. Although it may be the responsibility of the LearnScope project manager or facilitator to make sure that project outcomes are delivered on time, it is a good idea that all participants develop an individual timeline so that they are aware of their time commitment.

"Working within a timeframe was great as it meant that I could dedicate specific time to my project - to some extent I was able to organise other activities around my project." AIT Flexible Learning Leader

4.7 If Possible, Organise Backfill for Staff Involved in Projects

Some participants mentioned that they were fortunate enough to have Hourly Paid Instructors (HPIs) backfill them while they were involved in their LearnScope project. This gave them a reduction in their teaching load, meaning that they could devote more quality time to the LearnScope project. Although the total project funding did not cover the full cost of employing HPIs, it was still thought that it was worthwhile and ultimately added to the success of the project.

When organising backfill, it is important to plan ahead. Employ HPIs who have taught in the work group or system before. This will cut down the time involved in training and supporting the HPI.

If it is too difficult to get backfill due to lack of availability of HPIs or the nature of subjects taught, try to assist staff members involved in the project in other

ways. For example, it may be possible to release them from some non-contact duties while they are involved in the project. Although they may still have a full teaching load, they may feel less pressure on their time and more willing to commit to the project.

"I was able to share my coordination responsibilities with another team member. This meant that he was able to develop some coordination skills and I was able to have more time to participate in the project." LearnScope participant

4.8 Provide Opportunities for People to Develop Skills Further

What happens when the project is finished and the funding has stopped? It may not always be possible to receive additional funding to develop skills to the next level. Because of this, options need to be available so that people can continue with what they started and develop their skills further.

As is often the case, staff are highly motivated and enthusiastic when involved in an AFL Framework product or service such as LearnScope or Flexible Learning Leaders. They are delighted that they have had the opportunity to learn new skills and are eager to continue in their exploration of the flexible learning environment. It is important that organisations recognise this enthusiasm and continue to support their staff after the completion of the project.

Once a project is finished, assist staff members in exploring and identifying ways in which they can incorporate their new skills into their teaching environment. Encourage staff members to participate in other professional development opportunities offered through the organisation or external agencies. Use these "enthusiastic" people to talk to other work groups about their involvement in the project. Link interested people together and form an elearning/flexible delivery network to keep the momentum going within the organisation.

5.0 Conclusion

Our case study has been unique in that AIT had already implemented the AFL Framework products and services identified above. The main issue we have found in the past is trying to keep up the momentum and interest level of staff to utilise and engage in these products and services on a regular basis. Many staff are very keen but their main issue is finding the time whilst trying to keep up to date with their day to day work loads. We have found staff need to be constantly supported and reminded in knowing how these products can be adapted and utilised within their workplace.

AIT is fortunate to have an elearning unit, **adelaideiglobal**, specifically established to support AIT staff in the adoption and implementation of elearning within the Institute. This unit delivers a comprehensive elearning professional development program for staff members. Our involvement in the case study has given us the opportunity to identify ways in which we can further support staff in the use of the AFL Framework products and services. This variety of support will hopefully keep that momentum and interest at a high level so that staff utilise and engage in these products and services on a continuing basis.

Results from this case study highlight the need for organisations to support staff members in the use of the AFL Framework products and services. This support means that the AFL Framework products and services will be used more effectively within the organisation. Organisations need to develop a

culture that encourages staff to learn new skills in the area of flexible learning/delivery. Procedures need to be established, key support people identified, and systems put in place that communicate the organisation's commitment to flexible delivery.

Our involvement in this case study has also given us the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the AFL Framework products and services in contributing to our ability to offer students new, innovative and flexible learning options. Without a doubt we can say that involvement and use of the AFL Framework products and services by staff members at AIT has increased our ability to offer students new, innovative and flexible learning options.

Many staff across the organisation have used one or more of the AFL Framework products and services. Their involvement has got them interested enough to explore further. Many have participated in additional elearning professional development activities, some have commenced specialist higher education study (Graduate Certificate in eLearning offered through AIT), some are taking on key roles related to elearning within the organisation, others are implementing elearning in a larger scale within their work group. We see their initial and continuing involvement with the use of the AFL Framework products and services as a positive contribution that enables our organisation to deliver new, innovative and flexible learning options to our students.

AIT recognises the importance of the AFL Framework's commitment, support and drive to encourage organisations to adopt new technologies. By our engagement in various AFL Framework products and services such as LearnScope, Flexible Learning Leaders, NET*Working Conferences (both online and physical), and Toolboxes, AIT has been exposed to national and international perspectives and issues related to flexible learning. We can clearly say that AIT would not be in the position it is now without the past involvement of our staff with the AFL Framework products and services.

6.0 Glossary of Terms

AIT	Adelaide Institute of TAFE
HPI	Hourly Paid Instructor
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
RTO	Registered Training Organisation

7.0 Acknowledgements

Project Manager: Deb Bennett
Business Manager
adelaide/global, Adelaide Institute of TAFE

Project Officer: Catriona Ward
eLearning Consultant
adelaide/global, Adelaide Institute of TAFE

Project Team Members:
Rita Bennink (FlexWays)
Elizabeth Pohl (LearnScope)
Doug Purcell (Toolboxes)
Margaret Barron (Flexible Learning Leader, 2001)
Kate Fannon (Flexible Learning Leader, 2002)

Additional People: Numerous AIT staff members who took the time to complete the questionnaire.

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Sample Cover Letter

Appendix 2 – Sample Questionnaire

Appendix 1 – Sample Email

Dear AIT Staff member

adelaideiglobal has been successful in winning funding for Adelaide Institute of TAFE to participate in the **RTO Case Study Project** conducted by the Flexible Learning Advisory Group in conjunction with ANTA.

The Project!

The RTO Case Study Project is a component of the Australian Flexible Learning (AFL) Framework 2000 - 2004. The aim of the RTO Case Study Project is to demonstrate the application of AFL Framework products and services within the workplace.

Adelaide Institute of TAFE has been using several AFL Framework products and services for the past year. These include:

- FlexWays
- Flexible Learning Leaders
- Toolboxes
- LearnScope.

This project will outline how Adelaide Institute has implemented these products to date and enlarge further on how they can be continually promoted and supported across the organisation. If you want more information about the project, visit:

http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/discover/rto_casestudy.html

Your Participation!

I am in the process of gathering data from people who have been involved in a **LearnScope** project. Attached to this email is a questionnaire that will take about 15 minutes of your time to complete. Please complete the questionnaire (either online or print a copy) and return the completed questionnaire to either Liz Pohl or Catriona Ward (eLounge, Executive Suite) by 31 August.

Thank you for your assistance in this project!

Catriona Ward
ELearning Consultant
(Project Manager
RTO Case Study Project)

Ext: 78342

Email: catrward@tafe.sa.edu.au

Appendix 2 – Sample Questionnaire

RTO Case Study Project – LearnScope Participants

Please indicate your role in the LearnScope project:

- Participant
- Project Manager
- Project Facilitator

1. How did you find out about LearnScope?

- Colleagues/workgroup
- Management
- Institute
- Website
- Other. Please specify

2. Why did you choose to apply for LearnScope funding?

- Increase skills
- Broaden career opportunities
- Other. Please specify

3. Did you require support in applying for LearnScope funding?

- Yes (go to question 4)
- No (go to question 6)

4. What was the level of support you required and received?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I required minimal support | <input type="checkbox"/> I received no support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I required moderate | <input type="checkbox"/> I received minimal support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I required a lot of support | <input type="checkbox"/> I received adequate |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> I received a lot of support |

5a. List the type of support you required.

5b. List the type of support you received

6. Identify other AFL products that you used to support or linked to when applying for LearnScope funding.

- FlexWays
- Flexible Learning Leaders
- Toolboxes
- Click and Bricks
- Other. Please specify

7. Did the fact that other workgroups within the Institute had been involved in LearnScope in previous years influence your decision to apply for funding?

- Yes
- No

Comments:

8. List the types/roles of people involved in your LearnScope Project

- Lecturers
- Lecturer Assistants
- Managers
- Administration staff
- Other. Please specify

9. How has the Institute supported you in implementing a LearnScope project?

- Financial support
- Mentor support
- Application support
- Other. Please specify

10. How are you currently using the LearnScope funding in the workgroup/Institute?

11. What skills have you developed in being involved in the LearnScope project?
Please list below:

12. Have you been able to develop these skills further / build on these skills?

- Yes
- No

Please explain

13. How have you got other people in your work team and/or Institute involved in using LearnScope?

14a. Was your LearnScope project required to be conducted within a time frame?

Yes

No

14b. If you answered **Yes**, did you find working within this timeframe useful?

Yes

No

Comments

15. What was the cost to you and you work team in being involved in the LearnScope project? Eg financial, loss of expertise within the team etc

16. What are/were the benefits of being involved in the LearnScope project?

To the individual:

To the team:

To the Institute:

To external organisations:

To the students:

17. What factors have contributed to the successful use of LearnScope funding?

18. What things were not successful in using the LearnScope funding?

19. Has the use of LearnScope funding increased the Institutes capacity to deliver new and innovative ways of learning?

Yes

No

Comments

20. How has your involvement in a LearnScope project influenced the work you are currently doing?

21. Has the use of the product resulted in any new changes or products being developed?

Yes

No

Comments

22. Are there any other comments that you would like to make regarding LearnScope?
