Title of project
Building national and international markets through online development - Diploma of Community Development and Diploma of Interpreting.

Project leader
Anthony Graham (on long service leave so David McElgunn)

School/service unit name/college
DSC, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies

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Strategic objectives addressed:

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1 Executive summary

The Project was very successful with the School of Global, Urban and Social Studies (GUSS) now delivering 1 online program in 2013 and significantly closer to delivery in 1 other.

The School move to more flexible online delivery has been slow yet acknowledged as an important part of the direction of an integrated tertiary School like GUSS. With government tightening of fund allocation, diversifying activity beyond metropolitan and state borders appears to be an obvious step to addressed falling state government funding.

2012 LTIF Funds have been used to support the initial set-up and creation of 2 online programs: the Diploma of Interpreting Online program and the Diploma of Community Development through OUA.

The Diploma of Community Development continues to be developed with structural frameworks being finalised and continued work on content still in process. Given the nature of OUA expectations on design work on this program is continuing to ensure it is presentable to OUA standards.

The School has begun a pilot online delivery program for the Diploma of Interpreting. This pilot program offered to Dari interpreting students in Shepparton, is the first such offering of interpreting anywhere in Australia. It is also the first program ever to be offered offsite in an emerging language. This program which runs mostly online also has a remote videolink with students in Shepparton allowing students the opportunity to engage in a mixed mode model. As the pilot continues the result will be the opportunity to offer 100% online in the next 12-18 months. This could expand to multiple languages and broaden out nationally and even internationally in the coming years.

LTIF funds have made a significant contribution to the following work.
- engage staff to start the work on the planning, design and development of a study guide and a dialogue and terminology book
- complete blackboard shells and clustering for related courses
- design and prepare the structure for online delivery
- converted old video files to produce audio files for practice
- produce audio files
- produce videos for introduction of each unit on Blackboard
- engage staff to produce professional quality videos for ethics and professional issues in-house. This helped save significant funds for the program and university.
- engage staff to design and produce and test assessment tools for each unit, eg, quiz, e-journal, discussion board questions

This is a very exciting new space for the University as there is no other provider worldwide able to offer online interpreter training. While this is now being delivered the Diploma of Community Development needs further work. It is however continuing to develop as a result of much needed funds.
2 Outcomes

The impact of the project on the future development of the School cannot be underestimated. The move toward more flexible delivery options is a way of addressing the heavy reform agenda currently hitting the TAFE sector. With falling government funding and tighter compliance requirements the School of Global, Urban and Social Studies recognises the need to move beyond state borders to attract broader opportunities Australia wide. One effective way to achieve this is through flexible online delivery. By achieving this we are able to attract interstate students to RMIT and present better viability in how we deliver our programs.

More specifically the outcomes of the project were:

- Design the online learning platform and interface for Blackboard
- Develop new learning resources and materials for use in the program
- Customisation of existing resources suitable for online delivery
- Customisation of assessment tasks and activities to ensure suitability for online delivery

3 Project outcomes and impacts

The project initially set out to will develop the structure and resources needed to finalize the development of the Diploma of Community Development and to provid much needed development funds for the Diploma of Interpreting. It also was designed to provide professional development opportunities for staff who had never considered transitioning to online delivery mode. This was one of the projects biggest impacts as the project resulted in staff having capabilities in online program development that are now transferable to other teams in the School. The project required staff to fully engage in new technology and ways of thinking. Having several staff involved now means we have established expertise in the School that we did not have previously.

The outcome of the project was a little different than we anticipated. While we expected the Diploma of Community Development to be ready for OUA delivery what we learned was that there is more to online delivery than what we had anticipated. The resources need to be aligned with appropriate planning and expertise and this was not what the team experienced. The lack of accessibility to online development experts and additional support from technical and design staff would have been helpful to move the project along.

The other unexpected outcome of the project was we did not expect the Diploma of Interpreting to be ready for delivery in 2013. We are happy to report that the funds have now resulted in an online pilot program being delivered to a group of interpreting students in Shepparton. This was successful to delivery stage because many of the resources for the program had already been developed through previous funding. This content base which included existing videos, dvds and audios were easily transferable to the new delivery model. While the Community Development had to be developed from scratch a significant contributor to success was the ability to easily transfer existing resources into this new mode.

It will also initiate and finalize all development of resources for the Diploma of Interpreting as it transitions into online delivery. The project will release current staff to dedicate time to ensure the work is completed and the programs are ready for full delivery.
4 Dissemination strategies and outputs
The teams have been involved in delivering internal workshops and information sessions on developing online learning models across teams, developing interest and expertise across the School to promote other staff to participate. As a result 3 additional staff have made requests and are now involved in professional development opportunities to develop skills in online delivery and development.

5 Evaluation of project outcomes
In evaluating the project it is important to highlight the expected and unexpected outcomes which have been previously discussed. If given the opportunity to participate in developing online capability again there are several considerations that would indicate whether the projects’ likelihood of success.

First, do we have the appropriate technical and L&T expertise to initiate a project. Without sufficient initial expertise in the area a lot of time can be wasted on initial skills development before project starts. This appeared to be the case in the Diploma of Community Development but not so for the Diploma of interpreting. Also the amount of existing content and resources that can be easily transferred to online mode appears to have been a critical issue in this project. When starting from scratch the outcomes are likely to be less impressive rather than projects that already have a database of suitable materials.

To summarise the project was very successful as we have a fully operation product which has 15 enrolments. This is a huge outcome to the project and this program is likely to expand to other groups and potentially internally in the coming years. While the Community Development still needs work the funds were necessary to get the project to its current level of completion.

6 Budget report
Please see attached

7 Signature page
Please attach the ‘Learning and Teaching Investment Fund final report signature page’.
All signatures are required for the report to be considered complete.