

# West Yorkshire e-Learning Strategy

## Summary for Employers

*Prepared by The MRS Consultancy Ltd on behalf of The LSC West Yorkshire March 2004*

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## 1. Introduction

The West Yorkshire e-Learning Strategy was produced on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council West Yorkshire (LSCWY).

### What is e-Learning?

e-Learning is simply training (learning). It is called e-Learning because of the nature in which it is delivered. It can be accessed from computers and increasingly through mobile phones or interactive television. Just because it is “e”, it does not mean working alone, without help. There are people who are able to offer support, often trainers or tutors. They will help you and your employees either face-to-face or via communication technologies as indicated above.

However, e-Learning can mean much more to businesses than simply being training courses. Many larger companies across the world are using e-Learning not just to learn skills from an outside “expert” but to capture the wealth of skills in their companies. They are using it to share knowledge throughout the business. Very often there is valuable knowledge in one

person's head or within a team. e-Learning can help release it to the whole business through creating virtual communities. These have been shown to increase the company's share of business and competitiveness by improving working practices, increasing job satisfaction and reducing staff turnover amongst other things.

To summarise, private sector companies have adopted e-Learning through the influence of a few **key business drivers**. These are:

- Business opportunities / threats created by a rapidly changing marketplace and a need for quick assimilation of knowledge about new products / services
- Time constraints to ensure compliance with new directives / legislation
- Legal requirements to provide proof of training / competence
- A need for minimal disruption to business
- Cost efficiencies provided by e-Learning
- Lack of confidence in traditional educational institutions supplying the real needs of business
- A need to ensure same quality learning available to a widely dispersed workforce in different regions / countries
- A return on substantial IT investment usually by fast roll-out

## **2. Why e-Learning?... the Strategic Context**

The LSC recognises how e-Learning can help business in its area.

- e-Learning can become a key workplace tool. Smaller companies tend to lag behind larger companies in learning up-take so there is a need for highly focused, occupational learning that is tailor-made to a company's needs

and accessible from the workplace. In this context, focused e-Learning is particularly suited to tailor-made learning packages that meet the needs of businesses of any size.

- e-Learning enables employees to customise learning to their own needs and that of the business. Its flexibility of delivery and timing enables employees to learn “at their own pace, in their own time and from a location that suits them best”.

*(LSC Objective 1 – To extend participation in education, learning and training)*

- e-Learning is a particularly powerful tool for smaller businesses where in-house training programmes are often inappropriate.

*(LSC Objective 2 – To increase engagement of employers in Workforce Development to meet the needs of their business and the economy)*

- The importance of e-skills in the workforce has already been recognised. Lack of Basic Skills has been quoted as being very significant for business performance in many employer surveys. The associated ease of accessibility of e-Learning will increase the percentage of adults who develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

*(LSC Objective 4 – To raise achievement of adults)*

- To ensure that training meets the needs of employers in achieving their business objectives, the LSC will insist that their training providers monitor and report back to them on the satisfaction levels of learners and employers through feedback from users.

*(LSC Objective 5 – To raise the quality of education & training and user satisfaction)*

### **3. What is the LSC planning to do?**

#### **3.1 Strategic developments**

A dynamic e-Learning strategy steering group made up of both the supply (the LSCs, training providers, e-Learning providers) and demand side (businesses,

consumers) will be put in place. A key priority in this will be the building of strategic partnerships with the SME business sector. The strategy group's primary role will be to accelerate the growth of e-Learning in the sub-region and link it to other key players as indicated below.

Employers have a key role to play in ensuring that the needs of employers are incorporated into planning the implementation of the strategy and monitoring its success.

A Virtual Quality Centre for e-Learning will be established which will provide up-to-date information with particular emphasis on supporting employers.

### **3.2 Increase use of e-Learning in the workplace by ensuring that businesses benefit**

Learning, training, education - whatever you call it – is being increasingly delivered by ICT. However, ICT in itself is not necessarily a 'good thing'. It must have a business benefit and address the needs of a business and its workforce in the workplace. There is a need for a strategic approach to increasing delivery of training and education by ICT. The e-Learning strategy will be developed in the context of "business benefits" and address workplace learners' needs, particularly in the development of small, focused learning elements.

#### **3.2.1 Communicating the benefits of e-Learning to businesses**

##### **Communication plan**

The benefits of e-Learning applied to SMEs' business needs are considerable and a targeted communication plan will be developed.

##### **Case studies**

Case studies will demonstrate the business benefits of e-Learning in order to improve company performance. The use of sub-regional e-Learning in the workplace case studies, presenting successful

approaches, will be a powerful tool. These are likely to have a focus on specific industrial sectors

### **3.2.2 Development of appropriate business-focused skill packages**

Materials developed for the sub-region's portal will focus on producing short, bite-sized resources to meet the needs of business clients. The needs will be identified from Skills Gap Analysis research with companies.

### **3.2.3 Support systems**

Support systems are essential to any successful implementation of e-Learning in a business. Successful businesses have always appreciated the benefits of networking. Therefore a secure internet based employers networking facility will be set up to support employers who are considering or who have taken up e-Learning options within their companies. Where appropriate, further support will be provided by TUC Learning Representatives in the workplace. learndirect activities will also encourage employers to exploit the benefits of e-Learning.

Discussions will take place with local businesses to inform on longer-term support measures.

### **3.2.4 Taking the college to the company**

The national initiative of "Taking the College to the Company" will be supported in the sub-region once implemented across England.

## **3.3 Content and Learning Systems**

### **3.3.1 A repository / sub-regional portal of learning content**

A repository (e-library) of learning content will be created for the sub-region. This will enable resources and cost-effective development to

be shared. Training will be tailored and developed to suit the employers' requirements.

This will initially focus on providing content to meet the needs of the workforce. These needs will be developed as the LSC's sector and cluster brokers consult with employers and conduct skills gap analyses to determine common areas needing development.

To enable tailoring to meet individual businesses unique needs, the material will be developed in small reusable chunks ("learning objects") where possible.

All materials placed on the repository will be expected to meet certain international quality criteria and will be vetted before incorporation. They will conform to common specifications and international / national interoperability standards.

### **3.3.2 e-Learning vouchers or credits**

A system of e-Learning vouchers or credits will be considered for use by community organisations and SMEs to promote the adoption of e-Learning.

#### 4. Implementation Plan 2004 – 2005

AIM	OBJECTIVE	SMART TARGET
<b>1. To put in place Strategic Partnerships to accelerate the growth of e-Learning in West Yorkshire</b>	An e-Learning strategy group to be in place for the sub-region (e-Learning strategy forum)	Operational by May 2004 Quarterly meeting
	To build strategic partnerships within the SME business sector	A lead partner to be established by June 2004  A formal network of SMEs to be in place by September 2004
	To ensure key players have access to up-to-date information on quality in e-Learning	Virtual Centre of Excellence to be established April 2004 and then incorporated into the West Yorkshire e-Learning portal
<b>2. Increase the engagement and achievement of individuals</b>	To communicate the benefits of e-Learning	Marketing plan in place by June 2004  Dissemination activities to take place in September 2004 and January 2005
<b>3. Increase the engagement of employers by the development of a business benefits approach to e-Learning</b>	Development of appropriate business-focused learning packages	Skills gap analyses to determine need  Repository development to focus on bite-sized business focused provision  A number of learning packages in place by specific dates (+++)
	Communicate the benefits of e-Learning to businesses	Production of a business-focused e-Learning strategy April 2004  Collection and collation of Case Studies of good practice that demonstrate the business benefits of e-Learning to company performance (+++)
	Put e-Learning support systems in place for businesses	Further develop Union Learning Representatives in terms of e-Learning support (ESF Co-financing) (+++)

		Promote learndirect activities with SMEs ( <a href="#">learndirect targets here</a> )  Development of a virtual employers network
<b>4. Encourage the development of quality content</b>	Pump prime the development of e-Learning courses including staff development	Incorporate the development of new e-Learning provision into the Commissioning Document 2004
	Put in place access to quality learning resources	Develop a West Yorkshire e-Learning portal
		Populate a repository with appropriate bite-sized content to meet the learning requirements of the workforce (+++)
		The capacity to develop content in "learning object" format should be considered for any newly commissioned materials funded through the public purse
	All materials placed on the sub-regional repository to conform to common specification and interoperability standards	All material to be evaluated independently before incorporation.

**Key:** +++ Specific target to be identified after contract agreed as part of the ESF Objective 3 Commissioning process