

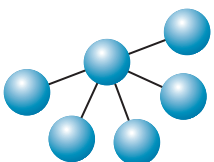
**Evaluation of
Learning Challenge Fund
Final Mini Evaluation Report**

Tourism Training Forum for Wales

A National Strategy



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



MAY 2006

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. TTFW Project

Background and aims

- 1.1.1. The National Strategy for the Tourism Training Forum for Wales (TTFW) was funded by LCF between March 2003 and February 2006 to develop a national strategy to enhance quality, relevance and take-up of training and education within tourism businesses in Wales.
- 1.1.2. The overall TTFW mission was “To provide leadership, guidance and co-ordination for tourism training and education in Wales, for the benefit of all individuals, businesses, communities and education and training providers that have a stake in the tourism industry in Wales”. The overall aim of TTFW is to change the culture of small tourism businesses by increasing their awareness of how good HR practice can improve their business performance, changing their attitude to training and staff development, and improving access to high quality provision.
- 1.1.3. The LCF project had three high level objectives and each of these objectives supported a number of operational targets and milestones that will be reviewed in this document:
 - Objective 1 – Encourage education and training providers to ensure they offer relevant, accessible and high quality services to individuals and the tourism industry in Wales
 - Objective 2 – Encourage tourism businesses to take advantage of training and business development
 - Objective 3 – Promote effective partnerships to encourage HRD for the tourism industry in Wales
- 1.1.4. The TTFW evaluation report explains that the organisation was formed in 1998 as a voluntary partnership. Following an independent evaluation in 2000, it was decided its aims and objectives could best be realised through an independent body and steps were then taken to secure the financial and organisational commitment of the WTB and ELWa. TTFW was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in November 2001. TTFW has accessed a range of public sector funds to carry out its aims and objectives and most of these have been in support of specific project activities.

Project structure and funding

- 1.1.5. The project was designed with a number of strands contributing to the three objectives above, covering conferences, websites, newsletters, toolkits, identifying exemplar businesses and training their key managers, partnership development and strategic engagement with main stakeholders. The project established a monitoring and reporting framework and an annual review of progress which led to the review and augmentation of targets and milestones on an agreed basis at the end of each year.

1.1.6. TTFW received approximately £368,000 over three years from the LCF. Other contributions to TTFW are expected to amount to £721,000 when ESF funding ends in September 2006.

1.2. LCF evaluation methodology

1.2.1. Shared Intelligence has been commissioned by ELWa to evaluate the Learning Challenge Fund on an ongoing basis. This comprises a Mini-Evaluation of each of the LCF projects, as well as an assessment of the LCF's progress as a scheme. The Mini-Evaluations are not intended to duplicate the projects' own evaluations which are a requirement of their LCF contracts with ELWa nor any actions that ELWa/DELLS might take themselves.

1.2.2. The LCF evaluation programme began in 2003. The first stage of the evaluation reviewed the process of setting up and administering the Learning Challenge Fund. The evaluation programme was extended out to individual projects in summer 2004. The TTFW project was funded for 3 years from March 2003 until February 2006. This mini evaluation is based on:

- three meetings in Cardiff in June 2004, October 2004 and July 2005 with the Director (and National Projects Manager when appointed)
- a phone interview with a key stakeholder
- regular telephone and e-mail contact with the project manager and
- a review of project documentation and regular monitoring reports
- a review of the self-evaluation report produced in March 2006 and the ELWa closure report from April 2006.

1.2.3. It is believed that such a spread of consultation and research has provided the basis for a comprehensive assessment of activities, outputs and strategic impacts from the perspective of ELWa, stakeholders and the project manager.

1.2.4. The ELWa closure report states that Cardiff University Business School is currently undertaking a review and evaluation of TTFW's activity since its inception. The study will specifically examine how successful TTFW has been in achieving its operational targets as set by the various funding regimes (including LCF) and evaluate TTFW's success in achieving its mission. The study will also recommend the future role for TTFW post-2006.

2. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

2.1. Project activities

2.1.1. As stated above, TTFW established three objectives and developed a wide range of project strands to contribute to these objectives. This was probably the most complex LCF project in terms of the range of activities and strands that were carried out. The entire range of activities, the outcomes sought and the agreed target for each are shown in summary as Appendix 1.

2.1.2. A sense of the breadth of the TTFW project can be given from the following list for 2005 alone:

- Identify exemplars of best practice HR in the tourism industry, train their key managers to be advisers or champions with other businesses and then hold regional dissemination events
- Develop quality learning materials and disseminate them to colleges, providers and business via an event
- Produce regular newsletter and online database informing the industry of what HR support and courses are available
- Develop and market a tourism-specific portal to disseminate advice and guidance about training (whodoiask.com)
- Increase the take-up of quality HR modules in the industry, such as IIP and Profit through Productivity
- Produce an interactive TV module, Overnight Success which ran on BBC
- Disseminate best practice via More Success Through Your People toolkit
- Develop partnerships, such as acting as the Welsh arm of the Sector Skills Council (People 1st) and working with the Regional Tourism Partnerships

2.2. Project progress and outputs

2.2.1. Each of the activity strands had a target agreed between ELWa and TTFW. These targets were the delivery indicators against which the LCF contract could be measured but they did not – in themselves – make it easy to show evidence of integrated progress nor contribution to the strategic aims of the project as they relate to changing behaviours in tourism businesses, changing attitudes nor the effectiveness of partnerships.

2.2.2. There is clear evidence that TTFW did perform well against the broad range of targets and milestones that were agreed and reviewed annually. The Year 2 TTFW evaluation reports “good overall performance against the majority of targets” and the ELWa project closure report concludes that “Overall it is felt that the LCF project can be seen to be a success, as the majority of core outputs for LCF criteria have been achieved”. It provides the following evidence:

- Individuals supported – target reached
- Individuals supported from Communities First areas – target reached

- Individuals benefited – target reached
- Businesses benefited – 96% achieved
- Individuals started or completed “learning episode” – 73% achieved
- Individuals achieved credit awards – target achieved

2.2.3. Some of the performance figures are quite exceptional compared with target. The trade portal (whodoiask.com) and the searchable database of training courses (tourismtrainingguide.co.uk) have been the areas of greatest success.

	Target	2005 Actual
Whodoiask website users	4,000 users a year	700,000 hits 70,000 sessions
Tourism Training Guide database users	800 users a year	36,000 hits 8,000 sessions

2.2.4. The TTFW internal evaluation draws attention to the areas of the project that have not fully met the targets for the final year.

- Strand 1b – The target of 20 exemplars in tourism training was agreed but 15 achieved.
- Strand 2b - The target of 15 exemplar staff to be recruits was agreed but 12 achieved. Of the 12 recruited, 4 completed both training modules and another 4 completed one module. They have not been used as business advisers as planned because of pressures on their time.
- Strand 2d – It was not possible to undertake the work on seasonal employment because the match funding from EU was not forthcoming.

2.2.5. It appears that TTFW was very successful in producing materials and getting them out there in the tourism sector in Wales. The dissemination figures are strong for newsletters, toolkits, websites and videos. It was also effective in planning and carrying out regional and national events and conferences. The project described their approach as “drip drip” involving constant reinforcing of the big messages and analysis of the channels of communication. It also succeeded in establishing partnership and collaboration arrangements regionally and with key stakeholders such as People 1st.

2.2.6. The main problem was with the approach that was planned to bring real credibility to the dissemination and take-up of good practice HR – the identification and harnessing of high profile HR champions for the industry. It was envisaged that these people would go out amongst their peers and spread the word, encouraging the “doubting Thomases” to follow their approach, develop their staff and improve their business performance. This innovative approach proved difficult in practice because “good people are busy people” and because the collaborative work with these champions had to revolve around training. It proved quite difficult to get them on to courses.

3. PROJECT OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

3.1. Outcomes and benefits

- 3.1.1. The outputs for the project have been discussed above and there is evidence of achievement against the large majority of output targets. However it remains a considerable challenge for business training and HR initiatives to evidence robust impacts in terms of improved behaviours and business performance. This is a universal challenge – not just in tourism or for TTFW.
- 3.1.2. The classic training and HR evaluation model developed by Donald Kirkpatrick in the USA looks at four levels of impact, forming a pyramid:
- student reaction
 - knowledge transfer
 - behavioural change
 - and business results.
- 3.1.3. Evidence points to more intensive interventions having a greater potential to impact at the behavioural change and business performance levels. This might have been the case with the exemplar/championing programme had it got up and running. The majority of the TTFW materials and interventions were less intensive and, while the website and the TV programme for instance might have encouraged fundamental change in some cases, it has not been evidenced that they have actually brought about such change more broadly. Perhaps the independent evaluation will clarify this as could the development of case studies drawn up on a regional or sub-sector basis.
- 3.1.4. The development of best practice HR in a sector such as tourism is a long-term challenge and it would not be anticipated that TTFW would solve the problem overnight. To address the market failures that constrain the effective provision and take-up of training and HR development will require continuing intervention and a more intensive programme of impact and outcome measurement.
- 3.1.5. One stakeholder, the director of a Regional Tourism Partnership, believes that TTFW played a major part in the effectiveness of a successful training initiative (Gallu) which was innovative in that it went out and directly engaged with small tourism businesses to identify their current and future HRD needs. TTFW did not have the local networks but played an important role by bringing an awareness of national strategies and HR issues which linked well with the local networking available in the region. The RTP has evidence of the effectiveness of the training programme and its impacts on many participating small businesses.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO LCF OBJECTIVES

4.1. Aims of the Learning Challenge Fund

4.1.1. This section looks at the extent to which the TTFW National Strategy Project contributed to the aims and objectives of the Learning Challenge Fund. In summary, the key objectives and success criteria for the LCF, are as follows:

- innovation and new approaches in learning provision;
- a strategic approach at national, regional and local levels;
- collaboration between learning providers leading to improved learning networks;
- improving access and widening participation;
- delivering more and high-quality learning outcomes from existing resources (value for money); and
- effective mainstreaming of successful projects.

4.1.2. The contribution of each project towards the aims of the LCF is being assessed, partly to see whether the projects that were funded 'fitted' with the LCF's aims, and partly to see whether the LCF as a whole achieved its aims. Therefore, this section summarises both the intentions of the project ('fit'), and the achievements of the project in terms of the LCF aims.

Innovation

4.1.3. TTFW was innovative in a range of ways. The use of the trade portal was a first for the tourism sector in Wales and this proved a very effective way of attracting interest. The Overnight Success TV programme was also an innovative medium for disseminating good practice. This shows real evidence of using modern and emerging media to get the message across. Had the full benefit been available from the exemplars and champions this would also have been innovative and probably very effective.

Strategic approach

4.1.4. The project has been strategic in building national infrastructure, partnerships and provision in support of ELWa and WAG strategy for the tourism industry. It has supported national policies such as "A Winning Wales" and "Wales - A Vibrant Economy". The development of the regional partnerships and the work with People 1st also reflect a strategic focus. The internal evaluation report suggests that LCF funding has been vital in creating leverage with other organisations in order to develop a strategic and holistic approach.

Collaboration

4.1.5. The project was successful in building collaboration between colleges, universities, other providers, business managers and staff and the main agencies involved in tourism. The active participation in the regional partnerships and the successful conferences and events also helped promote a collaborative approach. The director of a Regional Tourism Partnership has confirmed the effectiveness of TTFW in

collaborative working, bringing a focused contribution to the table and supporting the local networking of the other partners.

Improving access and widening participation

- 4.1.6. The project was not focused on widening participation in the traditional sense of overcoming barriers to learning in deprived communities or special groups. However it did have at its core a determination to improve participation in HR development and good practice by small tourism businesses throughout Wales. It also sought to improve small companies' access to training, guidance and materials by introducing them to a wide range of channels and media – websites, databases, toolkits, TV programmes, newsletters and champions. All of these were aimed at widening access and boosting participation by the “hard to reach” businesses.

Delivering more and high-quality learning outcomes

- 4.1.7. The difficulty of measuring outcomes has already been discussed but it is very likely that a large number of Welsh small tourism businesses have been exposed to state-of-the-art HR materials and ideas, businesses that would have been unlikely to come across such ideas without the TTFW approach. The LCF project was not specifically about delivery but it did create the right environment for managers and staff to progress to new learning opportunities. It is expected that any follow-up project would develop the provision to meet the needs identified by TTFW.

4.2. Sustainability and mainstreaming

- 4.2.1. TTFW has received funding from a range of sources to deliver a number of projects. ESF funding remains active until September 2006. The organisation has been successful in building a relationship with People 1st regarding possible future roles and responsibilities.
- 4.2.2. The ELWa closure report states that “there is no funding available to continue a project of this scale”. It then suggests that certain elements of need may appear through the Sector Skills Agreement led by People 1st. Discussions are said to have taken place between TTFW and the ELWa/DELLS Business Support Team, looking at opportunities from the Workforce Development Programme.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND LEARNING POINTS

5.1. Conclusions

- 5.1.1. The TTFW LCF project is generally regarded as a success. It ran for three years and achieved the bulk of its operational targets which were designed to complement each other and also the other funding streams that TTFW had accessed. The project was aimed at creating a holistic and strategic approach to upskilling the tourism industry in Wales. It generated a tremendous interest in many of its “products” including websites, databases, newsletters and videos. TTFW also built good relationships at the regional and national level and contributed to national strategies for the economy and the tourism sector.
- 5.1.2. Problems with the recruitment of exemplar businesses that would engage with TTFW were the most serious issues the project faced. It has not been possible for ELWa to identify funding to allow a project of this scale to continue. It is quite likely that the timing of the project has been a constraint on its capacity to generate forward funding, because of the restructuring of ELWa, WTB and WDA and the uncertainty that this has caused during the crucial period.

5.2. Learning points

- 5.2.1. Key learning points would be that:
- The full three-year funded period allowed TTFW to develop their activities, review them annually and take appropriate remedial action where necessary;
 - The focus on the delivery of a large number of individual strands of activity can sometimes lead to less focus on the strategic and holistic aims and objectives of a programme and therefore make it more difficult to identify and evidence the achievement of the big outcomes and impacts;
 - The project has shown that there is a clearly identified need and a massive business market for innovative dissemination of relatively low-intensity support and guidance, if this can be reinforced by local networking and implementation support;
 - The project recommends an employer-led Skills Action Plan for Tourism, with clear roles for national and regional organisations and with UK-wide standards.
- 5.2.2. It is considered that ELWa managed the project effectively both in terms of monitoring and managing the contract on the one hand and in supporting the strategic activities of TTFW. ELWa had two different contract managers but it is understood that they provided appropriate support throughout.

APPENDIX 1 - LEARNING CHALLENGE FUND FINAL TARGETS

Description of Strand	Outcome or Objective	Target
1a. Exemplars of best practice in tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exemplars of best practice in tourism disseminated to the wider tourism industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify 20 exemplars showing a range of successful tourism training practice Disseminate via 4 regional events and via whodoiask; Target 50 provider beneficiaries
1b. Develop learning materials and disseminate via businesses and colleges conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate relevant resources at relevant events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold a conference event & disseminate appropriate learning materials
1c. Produce twice yearly online and printed newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform tourism industry of resources/ support available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce twice yearly online newsletter and disseminate to 4000 beneficiaries
1d. Organise providers conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate relevant resources at relevant events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TTFW and People 1st to have at least 1 joint event
1e. Undertake consultation with CCETs/ other stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure resources/ support developed is appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each regional co-ordinator or company will communicate with each CCET in their region once a year
1f. Map provision and dissemination via online database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform tourism industry of available and appropriate training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to enhance and develop the tourism training guide Attract 800 beneficiaries per annum

Description of Strand	Outcome or Objective	Target
2a. Develop and market whodoiask.com website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism specific portal to disseminate advice/guidance re; tourism training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue development of the content within whodoiask in line with tourism trade requirements Target of 4,000 users per annum Analyse feedback from whodoiask questionnaires Develop a Welsh sister site of whodoiask
2b. Use key staff from best practice businesses as HRD champions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business to business mentoring resource 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit additional managers or key workers for training scheme to reach target of 15 Use trained staff as presenters at TTFW workshops or as advisers to other businesses
2c. Increase the take up of HRM quality modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the overall standard of HRM within tourism industry of Wales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise a second IIP pilot group totaling 10+ businesses Following the Tenby pilot of Profit through Productivity with 5 businesses, evaluate the usefulness of the programme Produce Profit through Productivity case study via whodoiask.com
2d. Overcoming seasonal employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work towards overcoming seasonal employment within tourism industry in Wales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit full bid March 2005 Develop project if successful
2e. Produce an Interactive TV Learning Journey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop tourism training resource 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the success/usefulness of the Overnight success programmes Distribute 100 additional videos
2f. Map & disseminate info about tourism projects/courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please see project code 1f. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please see Project code 1f.
2g. Identify & disseminate best practice in HRM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exemplars of best practice in tourism disseminated to the wider tourism industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce More Success through your People toolkits
2h. Map & disseminate info about tourism projects/courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dissemination and development of relevant support materials within tourism industry of Wales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued dissemination of toolkits to 500 beneficiaries Evaluation of toolkit use