



Application to the Big Projects Fund

Project Name: Alternative Format Media (AFM) Co-ordination for LLN

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<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Action/Information</i>
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1 Background

Alternative Format Media (AFM) in its widest sense may not be just related to learners with disabilities it is also about addressing learning styles and the most effective medium for learning depending on the content and the environment. It is particularly important that learners receive information in respect of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) in a timely manner which best suits their individual needs.

An initial survey was carried out by RNC within the Hereford and Worcester LLN as to availability of AFM for IAG and whether there is a need for a more centralised service. So far 19 of the 39 organisations have been contacted. 8 of the organisations do not have any or have only partial provision of AFM. It is clear that:-

- There is no single strategy for producing AFM across the Network
- There is a lack of understanding as to what is meant by AFM – with a focus being on large print and braille. Statistics in respect of provision for LLDD in the West Midlands (LSC, 2008) show that there are increasing numbers of young people coming through the year groups with Autistic Spectrum Disorders and Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties. In which case it is likely that there will be an increase in the need for information to be presented in audio format. This links with the LSN Mobile Learning project.
- 8/19 contacted so far said they would be interested in a local/alternative/additional service
- Much of the existing provision is reactive and not proactive.

In addition and in terms of subject areas the difference in courses taken by LLDD is evident with 41% of starts in “Preparation for Life and Work” compared to 20% of the cohort as a whole. Health, Public Services and Care (11%), Information Technology (10%) and Arts, Media and Publishing (9%) had notable LLDD starts (LSC, 2008).

Also of significance here is that the average number of LLDD in WBL between 2004/05 and 2005/06. Whilst the overall figure has fallen by 6.1% the figure for those self declaring as LLDD has fallen by 8.9%. Positive progression is collected via providers recording on the ILR a learner’s destination on completion of an Entry to Employment course. The rates of

positive progression have increased in the region from 36% in 2003/04 to 45% in 2005/06 for LLDD learners but remain below the average of 48%. There are slightly higher proportions of the total cohort entering Work Based Learning (12%) and FE (13%) than for learners (11% for both). A slightly higher proportion of LLDD learners enter employment without training than the average across the total cohort.

2 Objectives of the Project

In order to improve the overall progress opportunities for those learners who need AFM the project will aim to:-

- a. Produce a set of guidelines for production for IAG using a range of formats
- b. Assist those institutions who currently do not have a procedure or process for production of AFM
- c. Ensure that feeder schools within the area have IAG in a full range of appropriate formats
- d. Ensure that those courses where there are learners with LDD have content in an appropriate format.
- e. Ensure that employers where appropriate have information in an appropriate format.
- f. To improve the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of production of AFM within the network

3 Project Approach

- a. Identify procedures in each institution/organisation for producing AFM
- b. Identify specific needs within each institution i.e. number of learners affected, shortfalls in producing AFM particularly in the area of IAG and those vocational courses where there are high numbers of LLDD.
- c. Identify employers where production of AFM may be required to meet the needs of employees.
- d. Produce standards and training materials for institutions and organisations
- e. Produce AFM where there is a shortfall and no institutional/organisational remedy with a focus on those learners studying vocational qualifications
- g. Develop a sustainability strategy

4 Scope:

A Key Products from the project

The key product is a training book and set of standards for Alternative Format Media which is aimed at identifying and producing content quickly, efficiently, consistently and at reasonable cost to meet the needs of individual learners. Production of AFM would be available to those institutions/learners where there are particular needs. There will be a focus on producing content relating to vocational qualifications and IAG.

The project would need to link in with other initiatives such as Aim Higher, the Area Prospectus and Molenet (the Mobile Learning Network Project)

B Out of Scope

Books, journals and similar publications where there is a copyright issue.

5 Constraints

- Must be related to IAG
- Must target those learners who are taking vocational qualifications

- Must cover the LLN network
- Must be sustainable

6 Initial Project Case

According to the Office for Disability (2008), 'Government departments and agencies should develop a strategy for dealing with the production of information in alternative formats to help meet the needs of disabled people. This strategy should be owned and championed at a senior level – possibly by the department's consumer champion.'

The strategy should ensure that the needs of disabled people are met:

- quickly
- effectively
- consistently
- at reasonable cost'

Smith et al (RNIB, 2001) in a study involving over 1,000 children and young people aged 5 to 25 found the following:-

- under half of the learners who said that large print was their preferred medium actually received it.
- more than one in four had to wait for study and other materials in their preferred format.
- more than one in five found the college/university library difficult to use and a further one in five did not use it at all.
- not all library records were accessible.
- nearly six in ten found they took longer to do coursework than their friends.
- one in ten learners said that they did not always get examination papers in their preferred format.
- almost one learner in five said that they did not have access to all the equipment they needed - eg. computers, assistive technology. Cost was put forward as one factor and information about the technology another.

Learners in higher education (HE) were least likely to receive materials in the preferred format and more likely to have to wait compared to learners in FE and Sixth Form.

7 Benefits of the Project

- Greater accessibility of information with the LLN
- Greater efficiency and effectiveness of AFM within the LLN
- Improved retention and progression for those learners who require AFM
- Increased effectiveness and quality of learning for those learners taking vocational qualifications

8 Key Assumptions

This development depends on a high level of expertise within RNC and this is in place - please refer to risk list and staffing sections. It also depends on the engagement of member institutions. The project also depends on stakeholder engagement, although our initial survey shows clearly that there is need/requirements for this work to be carried out.

9 Costs

(This should include the commitment of the organisation to pay 20% of the costs)

The project would cost £ 18,000. To be made up of 80% LLN (£15K) and 20% RNC (£3K).
 The costs would be for .5 FTE AFM specialist/researcher including on costs - £ 15,000
 Equipment and materials (including 50 MP3 players; 6 MP3 recorder/players; 6 VICTAR readers and related software plus any printing and copying relating to the project - £ 2,000
 Promotional materials - £ 500
 Travel - £ 500

10 Project Timescale

One year with effect from June 1st 2008 to 31st May 2009. This would enable identification of AFM needs for new learners for 2008/09. Content could be planned and prepared for in advance and any related issues addressed.

11 How will the project be evaluated?

The project will be evaluated by:-

- The take up of AFM production within the network
- The outcomes of the training in terms of quality of production of AFM
- The feasibility of sustainability plans
- The success and satisfaction of those learners who require AFM
- The satisfaction of vocational areas and employers where AFM in its widest sense has been implemented.

12 How will the project be sustained?

Sustainability is built into the project in that the key objective is to create standards for AFM in the region and to provide training in respect of AFM production. During the course of the project those institutions which are currently not able to produce AFM efficiently will need to produce a plan as to how they will do this once the project is closed.

13 Which aims, outcomes and/or targets will the project achieve for the HWLLN? Please also state which funding criteria this project meets and how.

- Does the project enable joint working between two partner institutions – yes this will link a number of institutions together and there will be a set of standards for AFM created across the network.
- Does the project make courses more accessible to students in employment – yes this will be a primary focus that these students receive priority as to materials in the most appropriate format.
- Will the project result in more students with vocational qualifications entering HE – yes as they should feel more confident that they will receive information and content in the most accessible format for their needs,

14 Initial Risk Log

The following table summarises the risks that have been identified that may prevent the project being completed to the required quality, budget and timescale. The probability and impact of each risk has been graded as low, medium or high to indicate the relative importance attached to each element of risk.

Risks	Probability	Impact	Containment Plan
Insufficient expertise at RNC	L	L	Range of expertise in the College

Organisations not willing to engage	L	H	Publicise project via LLN
Institutions where there is AFM production feel threatened that their autonomy /service is under question	M	M	Target those institutions where there is a need. Disseminate good practice and guidelines throughout network

15 Project Team

Val Cavanagh – Manager Multi-sensory Communications Team including AFM

Dr Anthony Sales – ICT/AFM specialist

Ailsa McCleod – DAISY and assistive technology specialist

Christine Washbrook – braille specialist

References

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