

# FINAL EVALUATION OF THE WELCOME E-LEARNING PROJECT: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**Career Concepts Ltd  
on behalf of  
Tourism South East  
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## The Welcome E-Learning project

Welcome E-Learning was an ESF co-financed project, which received funding of £343,980 through the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), which ran from January 2004 to March 2007. The project was led by Tourism South East (TSE), working in partnership with a number of other organisations in South East England.

Welcome E-Learning aimed to address underskilling and to boost ICT usage among managers and key workers in the tourism, leisure and hospitality in South East England by delivering a series of awareness-raising events, providing outreach tourism business advisor visits to engage with businesses, developing e-learning and online business support opportunities, and delivering e-learning, blended learning and other training programmes to meet identified business needs.

This evaluation report on the Welcome E-Learning project has been prepared by Career Concepts Ltd with the support of Martin Brunner, on behalf of Tourism South East.

## Project delivery

TSE was responsible for overall project management and delivery, working with a number of partner organisations and a project steering group.

A series of activities were undertaken to promote the project to potential beneficiaries and recruit participants, including six awareness raising events. Outreach business advisor visits were made to beneficiary businesses to provide information and advice on the project and ICT issues, undertake a training needs analysis, introduce the Partners in Success and Partners in Success Plus schemes and e-skills Passports, and signpost businesses to other agencies and sources of support.

Partners in Success and Partners in Success Plus were mapped to available Learn Direct e-learning programmes and other relevant training courses at the start of the project. A series of e-learning and online business support materials were developed including an online version of the Partners in Success toolkit and a CD version of the Partners in Success Plus self-assessment process. Dedicated Welcome E-Learning pages within the TSE website were developed to enable beneficiaries to access online materials.

An extensive programme of short training programmes was devised and delivered to address individual manager and key worker needs in beneficiary businesses. A group of 49 beneficiaries were assisted to study for an Institute of Leadership and Management level 3 qualification.

## Project achievements

The awareness raising activities undertaken and the programme of outreach visits were very successful at engaging businesses and their employees, and performance exceeded all of the main beneficiary targets by a considerable margin. There were 438 business beneficiaries against a target of 250, and 856 individual beneficiaries against a target of 600. Partnership working contributed significantly to the achievement of beneficiary targets, as partner organisations participated in raising awareness of the project and referring potential beneficiaries to TSE.

As well as being successful in terms of beneficiary targets, the project also performed very well against other quantitative targets, almost all of which were met or exceeded. Targets for outreach visits by business advisors and the delivery of training courses were exceeded by a considerable margin.

A number of innovative developments were incorporated into the project, including the creation of the Smarter Marketing training course and the delivery of an Institute of Leadership and Management qualification using a new, blended learning approach.

A number of dissemination events were held throughout the region and a series of case studies were produced to recognise achievement and demonstrate the value of project activities.

## The impact of the project

An end of project survey was carried out among beneficiary businesses. Responses showed that over 90% of respondents considered that the project had been helpful or very helpful in developing their business and/or management skills, that the advice and support they received had been helpful or very helpful, and that the project had met or exceeded their expectations. 56% of respondents considered that the project had led to increased profitability.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 14 beneficiaries, a process which was designed to elicit more detailed feedback, including qualitative information on the impact of the project. Feedback was positive on all aspects of the project other than the e-skills Passports, which were not considered to have been helpful by 50% of the interviewees.

Feedback from the project partners, business advisors and the TSE project team on project delivery and its impact was sought at the end of the project. Their comments were overwhelmingly positive, although they highlighted a few areas where improvements could be made in future projects.

## Conclusions and recommendations

From the evaluation activities undertaken, it was concluded that the project engaged successfully with micro, small and medium sized businesses, met or exceeded all key beneficiary and output targets, reducing underskilling, boosted ICT usage among businesses, and made an impact on key business issues, such as profitability, productivity and legislative compliance. It was well managed and the partnership approach to delivery was successful.

The project also developed innovative learning and business support materials, and contributed to meeting key strategic objectives in the region.

It was also concluded that e-learning proved less popular with managers and key workers than traditional short courses, and that the use of e-skills Passports was not particularly successful.

Based on the project successes, challenges faced and the lessons learned from the project, a series of recommendations are made for future projects.