

E-learning for natural resource management, Queensland

Background: With climate change and drought, there are many reasons why land managers need to be trained in the latest techniques. The problem is land managers are very time-poor; their time is dependant on the seasons, workloads and family commitments. One solution is to use technology to open up education and training opportunities at a time that suits their needs.

E-learning model: The Queensland Murray-Darling Committee (QMDC) set up a series of face-to-face interactive workshops for Landcare coordinators, land managers and technical staff introducing them to web 2.0 technologies, such as blogs, wikis and audio files.

Learners were given a free CD-ROM with the resources so that they could 'play' with them at their leisure. The idea was to give the learners the confidence to use to tools so that they could then access online resources and courses to suit their needs.

Outcomes: Collaborative learning means that participants are now using the tools to become creators and sharers of information. They are spreading how to use technology within their own organisations and becoming champions of e-learning. Meetings are now being run using web conferencing, reducing carbon footprints. Additional workshops will mean more and more land managers will be able to use technology to access education and training. QMDC is starting the ball rolling by developing an online river restoration course. The model is being shared with other Landcare groups throughout Australia.

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CultureLink Queensland

Background: Mature aged women in regional and remote areas often take a lead in community cultural events, such as festivals or exhibitions. However, these volunteers often have no formal qualifications to take on such a task and training providers can be hundreds of kilometres away. CultureLink Queensland aimed to provide the opportunity for these women to network, gain qualifications and become confident using online technology.

E-learning model: An arts consortium of Queensland Community Arts Network (QCAN), Arts Nexus, Arts Services at Rockhampton City Council and Arts North developed two accredited online courses: Intercultural Exchange and Connecting Communities. These were delivered using the web conferencing platform Elluminate. Training sessions were run over two hours on a weekly basis and recorded for learners that could not attend. Regional cluster groups were formed to offer support for the assessments and tasks. Supporting materials included course books, weblinks, webtours and forums.

Outcomes: A website has been created to allow the courses to be run for other regional and remote arts practitioners. It also includes links and information on participants and a platform for learners to discuss their ideas and concepts. One group set up a chat group, offering continued networking and support. Past participants will act as mentors for future learners. A training and support web has now been spun across Queensland that will hopefully spread across the rest of Australia.

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Other resources

E-learning on a shoestring resource kit

Using this online resource kit, community organisations will find helpful guidance, ideas and tools for developing and facilitating e-learning in communities and regions. The kit includes suggestions and options on the why and how of e-learning. You'll find guidance on low cost tools and technologies, as well as ideas and stories to help you get started.

<http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/creativecommunity>

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Australian Flexible Learning Framework

supporting e-learning opportunities

Community Engagement

building creative e-learning partnerships



Community Engagement

building creative e-learning partnerships

People living in regional and remote communities across Australia are developing essential workforce skills through the use of information and communication technology (ICT).

E-learning overcomes the tyranny of distance and provides equity in terms of accessing education and training.

Rather than having to travel hundreds of kilometres to their 'nearest' training provider, community learners can now upskill and reskill using web 2.0 technologies, such as blogs, wikis and web conferencing.

The e-learning capability of vocational education and training (VET) learners in regional and remote Australia has been developed through the national training system's e-learning strategy, the Australian Flexible Learning Framework (Framework).

Now these e-learning models are being embedded in other communities, all benefiting from the Framework's national pool of products, resources and infrastructure.



VoluntEarning, New South Wales

Background: Small community-based organisations are often a lifeline to local residents. They tend to be run by volunteers who often have no experience in managing large budgets, staff and insurance. These volunteers are a long way away from a training organisation. The aim of VoluntEarning was to use e-learning to educate volunteers in Community Technology Centres (CTCs) across New South Wales in their roles and responsibilities as a committee member.

E-learning model: Using the free course management system Moodle as the platform for an online course, volunteers from 10 CTCs worked towards four units of the *Certificate IV in Business (Governance)*, which focus on roles and responsibilities, finance and budgets.

The platform allowed learners to take part in forums, quizzes, chat and online assignments. Resources were shared through the book marking site del.i.cious and the web conferencing tool DiscoverE. A wiki was used for content collaboration, which was added to by learners and trainers. The course took five weeks to complete and was self-paced. Learners were supported and mentored by email and through the internet phone service Skype.

Outcomes: A course has now been created and tested that is being packaged for replication across Australia. A number of councils have already expressed an interest in using it for their community committees. The CTC volunteers that took part in the pilot are now better informed and have credits towards a formal qualification.

As many of these learners volunteer for other committees, their members have also become more informed about their rights and responsibilities. The e-learning trainers are spreading their knowledge with other CTC managers, with the course being made available to all CTCs in New South Wales.

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Regional skills for a changing environment, New South Wales

Background: It's no use teaching a course on sustainability if you expect students to travel in their cars, emitting carbon dioxide in the process, to take part in it. Byron Region Community College in New South Wales decided to practice what it preached and transfer some of its courses online. At the same time the shire council looked at new ways of engaging local residents in the democratic process through technology.

E-learning model: The six-week Energy Efficient Home Designs course from the college's Living and Working Sustainability series has been transferred from face-to-face to online, using audio and video streaming. Learners can now take virtual tours of houses, take part in a discussion forum and practice their graphic and design skills online. The course is backed up by a myriad of links to useful websites and resources. There are now only two face-to-face meetings at the beginning and end of the course. In conjunction with Byron Shire Council, the college has set up a moderated online forum for council staff to engage and consult with residents and local business. Initially it is looking at biodiversity, onsite sewage management and solar panels/rainwater tanks. Users obtain information about the topics as well as post questions or look at other people's ideas.

Outcomes: The learners have credits towards qualifications in the land conservation and building design training packages. Byron Region Community College is now building up a suite of online courses under the Living and Working Sustainability banner. The Council now has the ability to implement a fully tested forum in which to engage the community. Comments received through the forum will be fed back into Council policy.

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Building online communities in East Gippsland, Victoria

Background: Covering an area of 21,000 sq km, learners in Victoria's East Gippsland potentially have a trip of up to four hours to access VET. To overcome the tyranny of distance and open up VET options to local residents, Community College East Gippsland and East Gippsland Shire Library joined forces to train staff and volunteers in community centres on how to access and use online resources. They are using their newfound knowledge to run e-learning courses and support learners.

E-learning model: Using the learning tool '23 Things' (<http://blog.net.au/bolceg>) staff and volunteers from 11 centres worked through a self-paced 12-week course, which took in blogging, photos and imaging, RSS and news feeds, tagging, social networking sites and podcasting. They also took part in four online sessions using the web conferencing tool Live Classroom, looking at access to information and databases; how to present using the tool; how to facilitate and record a presentation; and the principles of adult learning.

Outcomes: Community centre staff and volunteers are now equipped to raise awareness in the community of the benefits of e-learning. This is being done through mini e-learning courses and ICT training sessions. Staff and volunteers are now a resource in their own right to support learners that are using technology to access accredited education and training. An e-learning model has now been established, which can be run in other community centres. The Library Service will use web 2.0 technology to establish an e-newsletter alerting the community to education and information resources in the area. There will be continued online communication between the Community College, Library Service and the remote community centres.

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Building capacity for e-learning in rural and remote communities, Tasmania

Background: Unemployment rates may be at an all-time low but often people need to reskill or upskill to access job opportunities. This is particularly difficult for unemployed people living in regional and remote areas where local training providers often don't exist. This is being remedied in Tasmania by training Online Access Centre coordinators in e-learning tools and supporting learners.

E-learning model: Centre coordinators from nine areas were upskilled in the use of new technologies. The online course was delivered through the free content management system Moodle and the learning backed up by blogs and forums. Face-to-face workshops taught coordinators how to facilitate study circles, mentor and coach learners. The training resulted in credits towards the *Certificate IV in Training and Assessment*. Coordinators practised their new skills by setting up mini projects to engage the community. They picked a tool then wrote, delivered and evaluated a course based on a common interest, such as scrap booking or photography.

Outcomes: The learners have become mentors to train coordinators from the other 54 Online Access Centres. The mini projects are continuing and more are being set up. Technology is being used as a 'carrot' to engage people returning to work, who are then encouraged to develop their skills through online courses. Community groups are now approaching centre coordinators to access training in web 2.0.

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