

Pound Plus - LM3

Cheshire West and Chester Council

Introduction

This case study describes an approach to 'Pound plus' developed by Cheshire West and Chester Council that demonstrates the economic impact of the public pound on a local economy in addition to the actual learning delivered.

The activity

The activity was designed to demonstrate the wider benefits and economic impact that Community Learning funding had on the local economy in quantitative terms. The CLT analysed its own purchasing data and surveyed partners and staff to gain information on where they spent grants and salaries they received from community learning. This was a voluntary process although the importance of participation was stressed. The result was 25% partner response rate and 75% staff participation. As it was a development activity there was insufficient time, or will, to make it a contractual obligation.

The resulting data was then analysed to calculate how much of the community learning budget the service, staff and partners spent on goods and supplies in the local areas and how much elsewhere. The results indicated that community learning funding has significant monetary benefits to the local economy in addition to the wider benefits of learning. It also indicated that loss of this funding would have a ne

The differences this approach has made

The programme had significant benefits for participants and the partner organisations.

Learners

Learners benefited as the research strengthened the case for continued public funding and provision by demonstrating in simple quantitative terms the huge negative impact for the local area, as well as individual learners, of losing the Community Learning funding.

Managers, staff and volunteers

The process raised staff awareness of the impact of their personal and business spending and gave individual staff robust data to quote in their interactions with agencies and members of the local community.

The organisation

The findings highlighted the additional benefits of the existing adult learning activities and the added monetary value that Adult Learning contributes to local communities. They provided a strong, evidenced argument for keeping the Adult Learning department within the organisation by demonstrating to Members and senior management the wider impact and benefits of the department to the local community and local economy in quantitative terms.

Challenges and solutions

The first challenge was to find a method to demonstrate this approach to £+ that was achievable within the organisation and within the timeframe of the CLT. This was resolved by researching different methodologies to find an appropriate approach.

The next challenge was how to obtain potentially sensitive/confidential information in an anonymous manner from individuals without asking for any personal information such as spending habits. This was addressed by devising a method, and providing examples, of how individuals could contribute and reassuring them that they need not divulge any sensitive information.

Acquiring the skills to manipulate and analyse this type of financial data was a further challenge that was resolved by training to gain new IT skills using readily available existing software at an advanced level.

Critical factors for success

The combined elements that made this work successful were:

1. securing individual participation and questionnaire returns;
2. securing access to the correct data;
3. time to complete the process.

The “golden moment”

When working through the process, the potential benefits grew with each level of results. When combined with other research conducted by NIACE, the results far exceeded our tentative expectations.

Additional materials

a) Methodology (LM3 methodology and CLIC LM3 summary)

This material provides details of the methodology used. LM3 methodology sets the details of the process and CLIC LM3 summary summarises the three stages of the process.

b) LM3 Staff contribution Sample Questionnaire for staff

This material is an example of the form sent to all Adult Learning staff with a worked example to assist them to complete it.

c) Sample Questionnaire for partners (Partner contribution £+ Community Learning Trust)

This material is an example of the form sent to partners with a worked example to assist them to complete it.

Contacts for further information

Clare Latham clare.latham@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Jill Gates jill.gates@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk