

USAID Knowledge Management Inventory

E-Learning and Blended Learning Initiatives

1. Describe your knowledge sharing activity - what did you do? – how did you do it?

In the summer of 2000, we designed and offered our first collaborative e-learning workshop. Designed in partnership with Partners for Population and Development, 16 participants from 15 nations over 10 time zones worked together to develop and refine concept papers to pitch to donors. Since then, MSH has expanded its repertoire of e-learning products, particularly those which are integrated into a larger blended learning strategy combining both face-to-face and distance learning and collaboration.

Some examples are:

Cost Revenue Analysis (CORE) virtual hub: the focus of this Web site is on coaching and support from facilitators as well networking and experience exchange among course alumni. The site gathers together a database of participants (photos, contact info and profiles) from India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan along with course materials, special recognition, tools and resources, contact info for moderators, and participant action plans for the year which are continuously updated.

Drug and Therapeutics Committee (DTC) virtual hub: similar to the CORE hub above, this Web site contains a participant database for 150 alumni around the world so people can stay in touch with their fellow coursemates from Indonesia, Guatemala, Nepal, Kenya, etc.

Virtual hub for Lidernet: this integrated suite of electronic products is being designed and built by the School of Public Health and Secretariat of Health in the most progressive state in Brazil – Ceara. Bringing together all the elements of the virtual hubs above, this hub will also include full modules from the original leadership development course redesigned for learning at a distance as well e-mail discussion groups which will move alumni of the leadership development course forward through joint discussion and brainstorming of approaches to their current challenges. This virtual hub features ongoing dynamic mechanisms for growing knowledge such as: Best practices and success stories generated in the e-mail discussion groups will be reformatted and placed on the Web site as well as integrated into the leadership development course.

Business planning program and virtual hub: currently being piloted with the PROCOSI network in Bolivia, this blended learning program enables nonprofits to articulate new ideas and explore new funding possibilities for their breakthrough ideas. Demand for the program in four languages is high, and it is hoped that in the coming year, program participants will be able to continue their learning and experience exchange through a dedicated virtual hub. This program is piloting an innovative method of having highly-qualified partners in the field add the program to their own suite of products, further refining the secondary materials for their region while continuing to share their learning with other program facilitators around the world.

Virtual leadership development course (VLDP) and virtual hub: eighty people from twelve organizations in eight different countries are currently participating in the first offering of the VLDP. Combining individualized e-learning with face-to face work within their organizational teams, the VLDP utilizes a blended learning approach to offer organizations an opportunity for virtual leadership development and support, long-term participation in a virtual leadership network (thought the Leadernet hub under development), and reliable post-course support and access to leadership development materials.

Leadernet: to be launched in 2003, this virtual hub will link all ongoing leadership development programs in a single Web site allowing participants of Lidernet in Brasil to see what participants in the VLDP are working on, to discuss current challenges and exchange best approaches, to search alumni database for health professionals in the same region or field, to access information on the best articles and resources for managers who lead.

Technical Cooperation Network virtual hub: coming in 2003

2. *Describe your motivation / rationale / value proposition / business case for the initiative – why did you do it? – for whom?*

There are a number of reasons which compelled us to explore blended learning and collaboration methodologies to increase its impact in the field. These include:

Impact: there is growing evidence that a mix of learning methods, both distance and face-to-face, has a power and lasting impact not found in single method/delivery scenarios. We are continuing to innovate in the design and delivery of its technical assistance and partnering efforts.

Sustainable South-to-South experience exchange: Instead of one-off study trips or courses, we are working to give health professionals in the developing world the ability to learn from their colleagues in an ongoing manner, growing their collective knowledge in a global community of practice.

Flexibility: our target audiences are busy professionals whose learning often needs to be on demand and responsive to their demanding schedules. E-learning products enable these professionals to choose when and where they will participate, either within a set timeframe for the course, or at their convenience for self-guided tutorials and the ongoing experience exchange post-course.

Ease of customization: we are working on a model where courses have standardized core materials in a number of key languages. They are then accompanied by a range of multimedia case studies and supplementary optional materials which are developed during each offering, by individual facilitators and course participants. These secondary materials will allow course facilitators to pick and choose among a range of materials to tailor their offering to the client's particular needs and context.

Scalability: blended learning does not have one model but rather a huge range of possible implementation and delivery options. Some are more scalable than others, and we are exploring which elements and which kind of content is most readily scaled to much larger audiences.

3. *Describe any future implications or issues related to the initiative, e.g., what plans are in place? What current constraints or challenges are you facing? How is the initiative being sustained / maintained? How can it be replicated or scaled up?*

All of the products named above are part of the ongoing strategy to create communities of practice and learning around any course offering. By enabling course and program participants to continue learning and sharing with their colleagues, we expect to greatly increase the reach, impact and sustainability of its technical assistance, and most importantly, to foster a greater dialogue among health professionals in the field whose experience is rich, profound and ever growing.

For further details on strategy, direction, challenges, and more, please feel free to e-mail Jude Griffin at: jgriffin@msh.org

Electronic documentation link:
Email for details