

Havant UK Online Centres

Planning and delivering community ICT access points in a deprived Area

1 Background

Havant borough nestles alongside Portsmouth in Hampshire and has a population of 120,000 people residing in approximately 50,000 homes. Unemployment is low (2.5%), but income levels are well below the national average, and the borough falls within the criteria to attract regeneration funding according to the UK Deprivation Index.

Havant Borough Council's Regeneration Team identified a need to provide increased public access to ICT as part of its regeneration programme.

In 2001, the Team submitted a bid for UK Online capital funding to open public access ICT centres in the area. The bid 'joined in' with the UK Government's target of opening 6000 such centres by 31 December 2002. UK Online funding was specifically designed to pay for capital costs only. The centres were tasked with securing other funding sources for all revenue costs with a view to running centres as public drop-in venues for at least five years.

2 What we were asked to do

IS Communications was asked to:

- Redesign the bid for capital funding, and then, once the bid was successful
- Project manage the delivery and implementation of 10 UK Online Centres

Re-design the capital bid

The original bid, assessed by the Government for South East (GOSE), was declined because it was too heavily dependant upon and linked in with the educational sector. We were asked to re-shape the bid within a framework that had a much stronger 'community' theme.

We identified that the points for public access should move away from education sites – where people new to ICT would feel threatened by the formal environment – toward sites that were already recognised and functioning as an integral part of community life. Partnerships with possible venues, mainly Community Centres, were established, and links with other organisations were made to ensure the new bid had the in-principle support of other community based organisations and services, e.g. Primary Care Trust, Police, local and City councils, adult learning colleges, employment and resource centres, and the SRB partnership. Consultations were held with community organisations and local activists.

In collaboration with the Regeneration Team we re-designed the bid so that it:

- Identified community-based sites for centres
- Determined capital funding requirement
- Outlined capital works programme
- Set provisional contracts for a managed service
- Determined revenue funding needs over two years
- Secured (in principle) revenue grants (from New Opportunities Fund/European Social Fund)
- Indicated centre management structures
- Predicted level/type of use and centre activities
- Presented strategies for continuation and exit

In June 2002 GOSE approved the new bid.

Project manage the delivery and implementation of 10 UK Online Centres

In June 2002 we were engaged by Havant Borough Council to project manage the setting up of ten UK Online Centres, in accordance with the approved bid. The grant was to be delivered under stringent criteria, principally that the Centres were up and running by December 2002, leaving only six months to take the project from the bid's design to a fully functioning ICT programme. To ensure that the project was delivered on time and to budget we:

- Identified a project goal and objectives
- Constructed a project plan, contract and service level agreement
- Allocated tasks and resources
- Monitored, reviewed and evaluated progress
- Re-modelled according to operational experience
- Completed operations
- Transferred knowledge and responsibilities
- Reviewed success.

Two personnel were assigned to the project and, over the next six months, we managed, co-ordinated and delivered the following milestone objectives:

Physical

- Procured capital equipment and a three-year managed service contract to the value of £375,000

- Co-ordinated capital works and refurbished eight sites (to host ten UK Online Centres) using local contractors/organisations to the value of £38,000
- Procured additional ICT equipment and software to the value of £50,000
- Co-ordinated the delivery, full installation and broadband connection of 72 networked PCs and full ICT suite peripherals

Managerial

- Established a legal management structure for the design, implementation and continued running of the project (steering and management groups)
- Recruited three UK Online staff and defined duties and responsibilities
- Designed recruitment programmes to establish a network of volunteer staff to act as mentors and trainers at each site
- Implemented a marketing strategy to promote the project
- Designed a programme of activities for each centre
- Estimated likely use at each site and set clear targets in association with funding body criteria
- Constructed user agreements and terms and conditions for use
- Reported progress to the client at regular intervals and kept them fully informed
- Produced a 'handover report' and formally transferred responsibilities to the Online staff having achieved contractual obligations and all objectives

Financial

- Constructed a project budget for the capital spend of £500,000 meeting all GOSE criteria
- Constructed a project budget for the revenue spend of £250,000 over two years that satisfied the forecast criteria for each funding body (NOF/ESF/HBC)
- Established financial protocol with the accountable body (HBC)
- Ensured 'best value' across the project

Collaborative

- Established working relationships with local public sector organisations – Hampshire PCT, Police, Hampshire CC, Havant BC, Employment Resource Centre, FE Colleges, Youth Groups
- Established partnerships with all participating community organisations

- Identified 'in-kind' funding to the value of £100,000
- Liaised with funding agencies to ensure all criteria were met and would continue to do so (NOF, GOSE, DfES, BECTA, NGfL).

The project was delivered on time and within budget. The centres are already proving very useful in allowing people to take their first steps with computers. New members are encouraged, but not compelled to undertake some form of training, informal as well as formal, and drop-in sessions, offering unlimited Internet access for a one-off joining fee of 50p, are extremely popular. Activities ranging from word processing to sewing/knitting to music production are held on a regular basis.

Visit www.havantonline.org.uk

3 Client Comment

"Now that the Havant Online project has been established, I would like to thank you for the efficient and diligent way IS Communications set up the ten centres. As you know the Borough Council came in late on the UK online programme and the final approval of the Bid gave barely six months to get the centres equipped and set up. Meeting all the GOSE requirements.

This could not have been done without IS Communications. The fast and efficient way of dealing with the programme with a proactive can-do attitude helped the Borough Council meet the deadlines. It is reassuring to know that IS remain committed to the project beyond the contractual relationship.

Thank you for your help".

Roger Sherlock
Economic Development Manager
Havant Borough Council