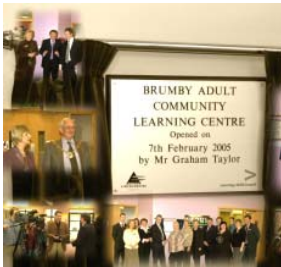


NIACE Research and Development



Key Findings



Photos courtesy of North Lincolnshire, Staffordshire and Kent Local Authorities

Adult and Community Learning Challenge Fund (Major Capital)

Review of Projects in 2002-2003, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005

Abstract

The LSC provides capital grant funding support to Local Authorities (LA) and other ACL providers through the ACL Major Capital Challenge Fund. The fund provides grant funding to enable the development of new buildings and the renovation of existing buildings to provide adult learning opportunities. NIACE was contracted to consult with all providers of ACL in receipt of funding from the Challenge Fund in the years 2002-03, 2003-04 & 2004-05.

The LSC is keen to understand how the ACL (Major Capital) Grant Challenge Fund has benefited providers in receipt of funding. Specifically the LSC sought to find information in the following areas:

- ❖ project outcomes
- ❖ financial implications of the work
- ❖ property aspects relevant to the work
- ❖ the funding process
- ❖ changes to the curriculum
- ❖ building & building location

Research methodology:

NIACE was contracted to survey all 85 providers of ACL in receipt of funding from the Challenge Fund in the years 2002-03, 2003-04 & 2004-05. Each of the providers from each of the 3 years was consulted using a proforma emailed to them on 14th June 2005. Providers were given an original deadline of 22nd July 2005 to return by. However, further extended deadlines were agreed and the absolute final cut off point was 1st September 2005. The consultation was based upon the questions used last year to maintain consistency and to enable a comparative analysis between this year's data and last year's data. In addition, two separate annexes were attached to the consultation this year. These annexes were used to collect elemental data on new buildings and refurbishments.

The consultation was split into 7 sections and comprised 25 qualitative and quantitative questions. The consultation proforma was reformatted to include more space to incorporate qualitative data on the benefits of the Challenge Fund. The questions were grouped into seven sections: Project Consent, Project Outcomes (to date), Project Outcomes (completed), Curriculum, Learners & Learner Numbers, Building & Building Location and General Feedback.

Key Findings

The main conclusions of the project are:

- ❖ 36% of providers responded to the proforma.
- ❖ The highest rate of return was from providers in receipt of funding in 2003-04.
- ❖ The average final cost of completed ACL Challenge Funded works is £1,085,202. Based on the final costs figures submitted by providers, the average final cost of a project was highest in 2004-05 (£1,359,697).
- ❖ 35% of projects were completed within original cost estimates.
- ❖ The average (mean) estimated life of the project is 43 years.
- ❖ 19% of capital works were undertaken as a result of Health & Safety issues. In each instance, the provider has re-evaluated their Health & Safety policy and found that as a result of the investment, their resources now meet their obligations under that policy.
- ❖ 58% said that as a result of the capital funding received, changes have been made to the curriculum offered by their ACL service.
- ❖ Providers have been able to provide a wide range of 'taster' sessions around areas including Art & Craft, Cookery and ICT.
- ❖ 64% said that the capital funding has had a positive affect on pre existing curriculum areas offered by their ACL service.
- ❖ 65% agreed that the capital funding has enabled their ACL service to better meet LSC priority targets around widening participation.
- ❖ 48% said that as a direct result of the capital funding they have seen an increase in learner numbers.
- ❖ 52% have also seen an increase in learners from under represented and minority backgrounds.
- ❖ 58% of providers said that improvements made to the building as a result of the capital funding have made the building more accessible to the local community and helped widen participation.

Recommendations

The ACL Challenge Fund is invaluable in giving providers of ACL the funding/chance to build capacity and improve curriculum and services to their local communities.

The proforma is a necessary tool for the LSC to use to monitor the benefits of the Fund. To ensure a better response rate the LSC should ensure the proforma does not repeat data requests previously asked of the providers in the same financial year and is sent out during term time to ensure staff are available to complete the proforma.

Output

- ❖ LSC internal report

Funder: LSC

Duration: 3 Months

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Requests for 'Key Findings' in other formats, such as large print, are welcome. We would be pleased to consider your request.

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