**WORK PACKAGE 4 – CAPACITY BUILDING**

**TEMPLATE FOR COLLECTION OF GOOD PRACTICES**

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| **Name of the best practice** | Foyleside Weekend |
| **Country** | Northern Ireland |
| **Description** | North West Regional College staff and students showcased the college’s huge range of full and part time courses, apprenticeships and undergraduate courses to the people of the city and region (grassroots) with a spectacular free weekend, jam-packed with activities at Foyleside Shopping Centre.  Visitors to the centre enjoyed a range of live performances, shows, interactive displays (fun science experiments, live artwork, 3D printing displays by the Business Support Centre & cookery demos), competitions, course applications and had the opportunity to meet with some of the staff and students based at the college’s five campuses from across the region, as well as receive support and advice from the college’s Careers Team.  The weekend culminated on Sunday afternoon, with a sensational Hair and Beauty Catwalk Show.  The message that went out is that the college is at the heart of the community – we are their college, we belong to them. |
| **Who is involved? How were they motivated to participate?** | Project Based Learning Coordinator – PBL is a key function at the college enabling students to undertake real life skills projects working directly with local industry. This event provided a fantastic opportunity for students to work on real-life projects.  VET Students – All students showcasing at the event were working on live projects. The majority of students were assessed live during the weekend. All work undertaken in relation to the event was assessed and counted towards their assessments/qualifications. Students were able to invite their families and friends along to the event so they could show off what they were able to do.  College Curriculum teams – this event provided interesting, interactive, and fun learning experiences for students through live projects. Increasing number of curriculum areas involved due to the success and feedback of past events.  College support services - Marketing, Administration/Enrolments and Student Services – provided further opportunity to engage with public; showcase college services; recruitment drive on a large scale.  Foyleside Shopping Centre Management & Staff – Centre Manager had been invited to judge at one of the college’s PBL Awards. He was blown away by the breadth of what was offered, the standards of work and efforts of staff and students. He was keen to develop a partnership and with curriculum staff discussed how the shopping centre could host the college helping to showcase to the community what we do; what they have on their doorstep.  College’s ‘Charity of the Year’ – raised a substantial amount of fund raising at the event. Students worked on additional projects to help support the charity whilst also fulfilling learning outcomes required for their qualification. |
| **Benefits** | The event is scalable as it can be scaled down to a half-day , one-day or two-day event. Transportable – can be run in various locations (NWRC Summer Roadshows – local festivals etc.)  Provides opportunity for 21st century learning. Many students were able to take out 50-60% of their learning programme as a result of the event through their preparation, practice and learning of new skills, demonstration, reflections and evaluation. All planning meetings, contributions and practical activities were documented and used as evidence in assessments.  Students developed very strong communication skills as they had the opportunity to talk to the public about what they were doing. They developed their self-esteem and a confidence in their own abilities as they realised that they knew their programmes well. It was evident to those attending that students were so proud of what they were doing and of their achievements. The public helped instil further confidence as they were praising students of the quality standards in performance they were witnessing and by how knowledgeable students were in their vocational areas.  As the event was so successful, the shopping centre management invited the college back for more events (this partnership is still in place with various evenets taking place in 2018, 2019 and early 2020. Showcasing and recruitment drive events are planned for later in the year.  The event gave the college the platform to bring the work of the college into the community – the community saw first hand the breadth and quality of work at the college and got a better understanding of what the college offers to students. Those attending the event had the chance to talk with the students and staff and they saw how the college staff are approachable, friendly and profesional.  Employers got to see what students could produce – students were given ‘value’ and given their place by the employer as they saw what the students were capable of. As students confidence grew they were able to do more in their workplaces.  The event created new links and opportunities for college staff and students. New employers engaged with the college. New PBL opportunities were offered. Students have been offered new training opportunities, some have even been offered employment as a result of the employers observing their practical demonstrations.  Students had the opportunity to develop further transversal, lifeskills. Preparing for, organising and planning the event was an enriching experience for students. They had to consider all aspects of planning an event, limitations of what they could achieve and come up with solutions to real problems, they adhered to Health & Safety practices and followed policies and procedures of both the shopping centre and the college. Students have had the opportunity to reflect and will be able to draw on the experience in their careers.  Low cost – used existing departmental budgets, Shopping Centre also promoted the event. Design students created the promo materials and sought approval from Marketing as part of their assessments.  Promotion of college – Marketing reported that they gave out more prospectuses that weekend than they had previously given out the whole year before. Admissions dealt with more enquiries and took more enrolments.  Representatives from secondary schools attended the event. This helped give the college its place in the region as school staff saw what we offer and what our students are capable of. As a result more pupils were sign posted to the college.  It can be difficult for the college to get in to schools to meet with prospective pupils as we are seen as competition to the secondary schools. We were able to reach more of these young poeple as many frequent the shopping centre over the weekend.  Inviting our chosen charity allowed us to show the collaboration the college has with local community. It also presented opportunities for students to carry out additional projects activities towards their qualification whilst also supporting the charity.  The weekend was a prelude to the college’s Open Days.  The shopping centre reported that footfall had increased on the evento weekends compared to the same weekend on previous years. |
| **Challenges and how they were overcome** | Choosing date(s) – it was agreed between the shopping centre and college that early Feb was most suitable as it is a quiet period for retail and Semester 1 exams and assessments has completed.  Hesitation to buy-in from college staff – give staff ownership and take them through the whole journey form concept idea to the event. Regular meetings to communicate and discuss. Staff have received recognition from college leadership, external and internal stakeholders, students and community for their efforts. Staff are reported assaying they were proud to be a part of the event and help promote the college to the community.  Curriculum staff were worried they would be overwhelmed and under pressure with additional work – provided assurances that curriculum staff should remain focused on teaching and learning and planning of assessments. Event Coordinator to look after logistics and other practical matters.  Communication – one point of contact in the college (central coordination) to avoid miscommunication and to avoid lots of staff individually contacting the shopping centre. Clear communication at all times.  It was announced that in Feb 2020, NWRC would undergo an Education and Training Inspectorate inspection. So as not to overwhelm staff and unnecessarily increase workloads the event was scaled back to a one-day event.  Prepare students from information days, inductions, meetings and prior to the event – reiterate that they are representing the college.  Ensure a range of sufficient activities planned throughout the event – detailed planning and coordination through a central point. All participants had schedule on their devices.  Ensure the event did not hinder traders – planning meetings with shopping centre management, security and caretakers.  Provide incentives – Foyleside agreed to offer reduction in car parking fees for staff participating, hot & cold beverages offered to staff, vouchers and competition prizes were provided by the centre for raffling. |
| **Step by step for the implementation of the good practice (transferability to other VET college)** | Present idea to local shopping centre or similar community venue.  College to appoint an Event Coordinator who should act as a central point for college staff and will liase on behalf of the college with shopping centre management.  One coordinator from each of the curriculum areas/departments involved to liasie with Event Coordinator.  Draw up a plan between PBL, Community Education, Curriculum and other departments involved.  Clear and concise communication at all times.  Detailed planning (NWRC makes provisional plans at end of academic year in May/June; from August onwards hold monthly meetings both internal and external – frequency of meetings increase as event approaches).  Set date – take into consideration assessments, exams, inspections and other college commitments and events. Also consider retail’s low and peak trading seasons.  Embed planning and organising of event into curriculum and learning. Students to be informed of the event at their information and induction days. Involve students in all aspects of the event from promo designs, health & safety, logistics. Ensure students are aware of what will be assessed and  Involve all relevant college departments including Estates and Marketing. Utlise college staff benfiting from their skills (eg. one of our IT Technicians compares the event).  College Marketing department to carry out a promotional campaign targeting local companies inviting them to the event.  Colourful, visual, noisy – ensure the activities have impact and draw in the community.  Detailed planning of schedule throught the event – ensure a mix of activities from across various curriculum areas.  Ensure all participants are aware of and follow the event schedule; when they are needed for activities, where they are supposed to be.  Review and evaluate success of event to make improvements for future events – present findings to college management and leadership. |
| **Target group** | VET Students  Prospective students  Local Employers – Local industry  Community  Local media – social media |

<http://www.nwrc.ac.uk/event/foyleside-weekend/>

See images below

