

Match Funding and De Minimis solution

The Problem

The Enterprise and Commercialisation Division (ECD), at Lancaster University, coordinates the 3rd mission* activity across campus. The ECD presented CHL with the challenge of building onto TS2000 the ability to track and cost the time spent working directly with individual SME's so that there is an audit trail in place, in compliance with the *de minimis* state aid regulations. If the business support provided to the SME exceeds *de minimis* levels, the client SME could be liable for excess repayment.

Because the ECD deals with funding streams including the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Single Regeneration Board (SRB), European Social Fund (ESF), North West Development Agency (NWDA) and Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) they needed a timesheet system that was both clear, and auditable. This must incorporate 'match funding', where an individual can be paid from one source and provide 'match' time into another.

Historically, the ECD used spreadsheet-based timesheets. But, ensuring eligibility and claim compilation has always been a tedious, time consuming and expensive clerical chore. Anne Swarbrick, the ECD Outreach Administration Manager commented, "claims deadlines are very tight and we needed an efficient and pain free system. Days were taken up to chase timesheets, check them, make sure they were valid, and to calculate *de minimis*."

*3rd mission – ECD uses the HEFCE interpretation to include business involvement, collaborative research, intellectual property, consultancy, spin offs, training, undergraduate placement and economic development

The Solution

In 2005, the ECD looked at TS2000 Activity Analysis – CHL's well-established time recording system. Used by the entire Learning + Skills Council (LSC) to evidence administrative ESF and other activity, TS2000 had been successfully audited by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) as an approved time recording system.

ECD staff visited Bradford College to see first hand the benefits of TS2000 operating in an educational institution. Impressed with the results, and with Bradford's overall implementation experience, the ECD decided to proceed.

The ECD had two additional key requirements: 'match funding' and *de minimis* support.

- **Match funding** – audit and account identification for both funded hours and matched hours to ensure a full audit trail for all bodies.
- **De minimis** – capture and analysis of costs by individual SME to ensure compliance with state aid regulations.

Both features were seamlessly added to the product, for scheduled delivery in early 2006.

The Results

As planned, TS2000 was successfully installed onto the University's Intranet. A 1-day Administrator training course was delivered to departmental staff from across the University.

After the training, realistic 'play data' was left with the users while the ECD and CHL devised the 'live' coding structures.

The careful attention paid to coding ensured both academic and non-academic project costs aligned with the Agresso structures (University finance system) for verifiable match and claims against the correct funding source(s).

A fortnight later, the 'real data' was substituted, and the Engineering Department went live on the same day. Within a week, the remaining departments followed suit.

Jon Powell, the ECD Outreach Administrator said, "Throughout the entire project, from specifying requirements, modifying the software to suit and getting to grips with our coding needs, CHL have been responsive and helpful".

He continued, "I am very pleased with the overall result. TS2000 is simpler to use for the timesheet users; it provides the project manager with information to better control their budgets, and it provides me with project by project staff cost to put into my claims. Basically it makes my job a whole lot easier!"

More Information? Contact Us

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