

Australian *Flexible Learning* Framework

supporting e-learning opportunities

Case study > Common Ground E-learning > SA > 2009

Finding Common Ground

Common Ground Adelaide and TAFESA Adelaide South Institute

Background



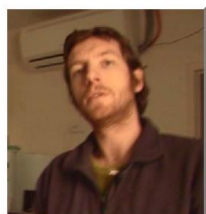
Common Ground Adelaide Limited, launched in 2006, is a housing company established to provide affordable rental housing to low income working people and those who are homeless or who are at-risk of becoming homeless. It is a not-for-profit company and seeks to increase affordable rental housing through support of the government and corporate sector. As a prototype in Australia, it mirrors the original non-profit Common Ground project in New York, founded in 1990 by a former

Adelaide *Thinker in Residence* and now *Patron of Common Ground Adelaide*, Rosanne Haggerty (pictured left).

Common Ground Adelaide's supportive housing strategy is about purposefully creating opportunities for tenants. It aims to foster meaningful links with the arts, sport, health and welfare, education and training sectors, which become the catalyst for a positive life change. Its mission focus is not just about housing but about an autonomous and socially connected life.

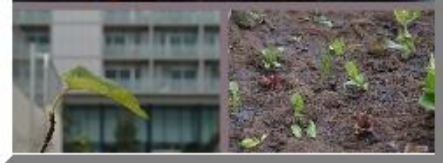
Common Ground and TAFESA preparatory education programs share close synergies. Both organisations deal with marginalised client groups; both seek ways of facilitating change, providing second chance education and personal development opportunities for individuals.

Through a partnership of these two organisations, a project using funds from the Framework, the project has developed a Moodle e-learning platform for Common Ground tenants, with free access to formal and informal learning and opportunities to gain accredited VET units through a simplified RPL (recognition of prior learning) process.



"I ... really thought I'd won the lottery" Daniel (tenant)

What was done



While the project team were able to source and use readily available material from Flexible Learning Toolboxes (Toolboxes), links and other repositories, the team also identified resource gaps. Therefore the development of learning objects using a range of media such as video, photographs, graphics and audio embedded in powerpoint and were contextualised for the Common Ground tenant group and locality. A set of freely accessible shareware and social networking tools has provided the Common Ground community with its own e-space.

Our concept of a community e-space is founded in web 2.0 technology and includes a browser-based collection of tools and systems creating an environment where learners can access information from a variety of sources. The significance of the project was that it is owned by the tenants at Common Ground and being learner-centred, allows them to make personal choices. As most learning

takes place informally, in different contexts and scenarios, content is supplied by many providers and in different ways. In this environment, learners can access, aggregate, configure and manipulate digital artefacts of their ongoing learning experiences.

Together with Common Ground staff, learners were able to control and manage their own learning, set their own learning goals, deal with content and suite software, email addresses, blogging and member logins. Importantly, they could communicate with others while they learned – sharing knowledge and skills, collaborating on projects and enjoying the experience.

Site specifications

- Moodle was the chosen learning platform and operational architecture.
- Powerpoint was used as a teaching mechanism together with a range of media.
- Some material and assessments were constructed using Articulate after exploring a range of other free quiz and low cost assessment/quiz tools.
- The use of Google Apps (educational versions – for a not-for-profit organisation) was included to provide the office suite.

“We have decided to deliver learning in a way that is simple and direct. We are not looking at entertainment as the primary objective because we believe the psychology of being taken seriously is very empowering.” Scott Davis Project team member

“Conversations with some of the tenants revealed that having an email address is a significant feature for them as it would provide yet another address albeit virtual. For others, capacity to upload personal artworks or photographs for portfolio purposes, display and comment by fellow tenants is also important.” Mid project Report Common Ground Elearning 200

Benefits experienced by Common Ground E-learning Project

“The Hawke Centre has been funded to undertake a Research Project on the Program Evaluation of Common Ground Adelaide. One of the ten Key Performance Indicators of this research specifically identifies a target for engaging 80% of tenants with an educational goal in their service plan will make

progress on completing the goal.”

- In the past, some tenants have been reluctant to take up learning outside the security of their own apartments. The Common Ground Elearning project has provided an e-learning space for tenants to interact with online tools and a range of non traditional learning activities linked to accredited VET units.
- Tenants can acquire ICT skills supported by service providers in the first instance and from there gain from self directed learning by becoming self directed learners themselves.
- Opportunities for collaborative learning.
- Opportunities to connect with other organisations within the network eg with the School of Dentistry, Adelaide University which supports Common Ground with outreach dental and health education.

Lessons learnt

- Develop an easily accessible online experience for learners.
- Remove technical barriers which limit engagement with the site.
- Provide logical navigation with maximum functionality including:
 - Minimum mouse clicks
 - Password entry through email address
 - Easy logon /logoff
 - Simple linear menus with no duplication
 - Simple web style without gimmicks.
- Design content and activity features with consistency and simplicity and which have true relevance to the tenants.
- Include tenants in the project development in order to instigate a sense of ownership and increase uptake.

The results

- The formation of a solid partnership with Common Ground and TAFESA Adelaide South Institute to set up a Moodle e-learning platform and portal at: <http://cglearning.org.au>
- A strong understanding of both the educational and personal / social needs of the target group and the ethos of Common Ground.
- Setting up of a learner support team composed of staff from both organisations to support tenants to sustain their participation in e-learning – still in progress.
- The creation of three completed on-line units with tenant involvement – more still to do.
- The involvement of at least 5 tenants in learning activities including a mix of general learning and basic skills programs..

Reflections and suggestions

In reflection, the project team took on a larger task than was intended at the beginning of the project. However, once we understood the target group demographic and recognised the potential for an expanded service to a greater number of end users, we were determined to produce a reliable, robust and sustainable product. This was time consuming and left less time to develop planned learning objects and video resources. However, the project had established a framework for learning, which will grow with Common Ground Adelaide and its roll out throughout Australia.

Framework connection

The national training system's e-learning strategy, the Australian Flexible Learning Framework (Framework¹) funds and supports [E-learning Innovations](#) projects which aim to embed e-learning into the national training system by supporting and enabling innovation in training design and delivery, at the state and territory level.

The Common Ground E-learning project aims to embed e-learning into the national training system by modelling:

- online staff training as part of a broader organisational strategy to build engagement with e-learning.
- building resources that reflect sound pedagogical principles for the appropriate learner cohort.

In engaging in this E-learning Innovations project, the following Framework products and resources were used.

- **Flexible Learning Toolboxes** ²
- **Access and Equity Online Learning** ³
- **E-standards for Training reference** ⁴

Acknowledgement

This is a South Australian [E-learning Innovations](#) project output, developed by TAFESA Adelaide South Institute and Common Ground Adelaide Ltd., with seed funding from the Framework.

¹ <http://flexiblelearning.net.au>

² <http://flexiblelearning.net.au/toolbox>

³ <http://flexiblelearning.net.au/productsandservices/accessandequity.htm>

⁴ <http://e-standards.flexiblelearning.net.au/>



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For more information

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