

EFCOG Best Practice #106

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Title: U-Learn - Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory's Multi-Faceted, Multi-Modal On-Line Learning Program (<http://ulearn.llnl.gov>)

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Why the best practice was used: U-Learn is the LLNL-branded portal to an innovative and powerful learning program proven to be cost effective and best in class. U-Learn targets institutional objectives while personalizing learning for individual styles. U-Learn integrates learning into the life of the enterprise, embedded in the work flow, bringing learning to users for maximum impact. SkillSoft resources are at the core of this blended learning approach, packaged with instructor-led training activities and other modalities, offered through U-Learn.

What are the benefits of the best practice: U-Learn is targeted to meet institutional mission objectives, local organizational needs, and individual employee styles, while maximizing training dollars. This targeted approach is developed in partnership with internal organizational consultants, Laboratory management, and cross-organizational work groups to identify emerging needs, and select and design learning interventions and initiatives.

U-Learn builds on two primary subject areas: business and information technology (IT). The business subject area covers topics such as communication, presentation skills, interpersonal styles, leadership, and project management. The IT subject area covers topics for end-user, ranging from Microsoft Office, basic desktop skills, and desktop publishing, to the advanced IT professional, with topics including ITIL, operating system and network certifications, and programming languages. Content from U-Learn is packaged with learning resources, including career coaches and organizational consultants, speakers and workshops, and social networks to create blended learning programs in support of organizational initiatives.

In the past year, LLNL developed three exemplary solutions in the two primary content areas, advancing the institution's leadership development and succession planning efforts.

- **Managing for Results.** The first solution, Managing for Results, utilizes the suite of business resources including live broadcast events, Executive Summaries, Quicktalks, and SkillSoft's Leadership Advantage. It is one of the core programs on LLNL's Leadership Ladder, linking mission success to innovation through leadership.
- **Facilities Management Training Program.** The second solution in the business content area, the Facility Management Training Program. Learning content and resources, mapped to competencies, were identified in U-Learn and, coupled with external technical resources, packaged into "learning plans".

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- **IT Virtual Study Group.** The third solution, the IT Virtual Study Group (IT VSG) Program, was designed to increase team performance, technical expertise, and knowledge of Microsoft's OS technologies. The IT VSG includes a unique peer-mentor feature that promotes knowledge transfer, early career technical leadership, and succession planning efforts.

How is the success of the best practice measured: LLNL measures the success of its learning program through user numbers and feedback, consultant and customer input, and return on investment assessments. Specific measures include:

- Number of users Laboratory-wide, by organization within the Laboratory (assessing embedded use)
- User classification (assessing targeted use)
- User demographics (assessing user diversity)
- User and client feedback (assessing effectiveness)
- Cost and return on investment (assessing value)

A customized dashboard tracks daily logins, usage, registrations, and account activations. User assessments are conducted annually. Assessments identify subjects and resources accessed, in addition to use and application. Open-ended feedback informs future directions in format and content.

Twice yearly demographic studies are conducted by directorate to understand how resources are being used by different groups. The aggregate data is fed back to each directorate so they can understand how their own organization uses the product.

The ROI is calculated twice a year. The first set of ROI data is used to ensure usage goals are on target for the contract year and allow for marketing adjustments. Mid-year data informs contract negotiations for the coming cycle. Year-end data provides the overall ROI for the contract period. ROI is calculated several ways, including course completions. Actual costs are compared to costs for employee training off site and course offerings on site.

U-Learn users have grown from 30 in 1997 to 4,150 active users in 2011. Fifty-seven percent of the Laboratory's population have active U-Learn accounts. Technical and scientific job classifications are among the highest users of the resources, representing 51% of all active licenses. U-Learn receives thousands of hits per month documenting strong user access. 86% of users strongly agreed or agreed that U-Learn is a valuable resource for employees. U-Learn's return on investment averages 136% per contract year.

Description of process experience using the best practice: In 1997, LLNL's Continuing Education Committee tasked one of its members to investigate the new world of e-learning and develop an approach for the Laboratory's workforce. Armed with part-time technical support and only 30 IT courses and 25 beta users the first online learning center was

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created for LLNL. In a market where e-learning companies were changing as fast as technology was evolving, the team identified adaptability as critical to continued success: while content and content providers might change, LLNL's users would be able to depend on a consistent, high-quality learning product.

In the early days of U-Learn, it was difficult to find content. Users bounced between multiple sites, with multiple log ons and vendors. In response to user feedback, the team worked to improve the site, adding content and consolidating resources. Then, in 2007, a historical transition of the Laboratory's contract was the impetus for great change. With the transition, there was a need for new ways of learning. The Change Management knowledge center was the beginning of a new direction for U-Learn. The knowledge center leveraged and packaged a range of resources in one online location within U-Learn. This emerging resource provided employees with just-in-time learning for transition management. Since that first success, the U-Learn team has been called upon to create other custom knowledge centers in support of key business initiatives.

The growing success of U-Learn has resulted in increased awareness of, participation in, and support for the program. LLNL was the recipient of multiple external awards for U-Learn, validating the program as innovative, effective, and best in class. Awards include a Perspectives' Innovations in Learning Award for Best IT Training in 2010, Best-in-Class Learning and Development recognition by the Aberdeen Group in 2011, *Learning!* 100 Award for Outstanding Learning Culture from *Elearning!* Media Group in 2011, and an honorable mention for Public Sector Excellence from SkillsSoft in 2011. This external recognition is mirrored internally with increasing support by senior management, applied use by project managers and supervisors, and overall participation by employees.

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