



An owls case study

Voluntary Action Orkney, UK



Why did you want to engage with OWLS?

- Voluntary Action Orkney (VAO) is committed to organisational, staff and volunteer development both within their own organisation and working with local voluntary organisations and social enterprises to help them become confident, competent and sustainable.
- VAO is an experienced training provider, developing, delivering and facilitating learning to meet identified need and is flexible and responsive in meeting demand in a diverse geographical area.
- VAO is committed to continuous improvement and has extensive experience of EFQM and PQASSO. VAO takes the approach that it cannot support other organisations to improve and develop if it is unable to demonstrate its own ability to do so.
- VAO was very pleased therefore to take part in and to benefit from engaging with OWLS; testing and deploying the framework to the benefit of our internal and external training processes.

Who are you?

- Established in 1967, VAO is the 'Third Sector Interface' for Orkney which provides a diverse range of support and practical services to the Third Sector to ensure the sector is sustainable and dynamic and is equipped to take advantage of opportunities and to deal effectively with challenges. (www.vaorkney.org.uk)
- The Third Sector comprises community and voluntary groups, charities, social enterprises and volunteers.
- VAO is also fully involved with community planning at a strategic level for the Orkney Islands.

What type of VET programmes do you deliver?

- ✗ IVET Initial VET, apprenticeships etc.
- ✓ CVET Continuing VET or Lifelong Learning

Level of VET programmes

- ✓ Level 1
- ✓ Level 2
- ✓ Level 3
- ✓ Level 4
- ✓ Level 5
- ✗ Level 6
- ✗ Level 7
- ✗ Level 8

Age of learners

- ✓ Under 16s
- ✓ 17-25
- ✓ 25-65
- ✓ Over 65s

Vocational sectors

Training, charity and education.

How many learners are supported?

Voluntary Action Orkney supports 51-250 learners each year.

How does VAO operate?

- VAO delivers flexible and responsive training to groups and individuals throughout Orkney; they deliver in community venues in the smaller outer isles and throughout Mainland Orkney and also use VAO's own facilities.
- As the local Third Sector Interface, VAO brings together experience, resources and expertise and works with the community and other partners to ensure a thriving, sustainable and healthy third sector.
- Alongside practical services to help support voluntary groups and volunteers, VAO also represents and lobbies on wider third sector issues.

How have you engaged with OWLS?

- Original UK pilot site to support the development and testing of OWLS 2013-2014.
- Carried out initial review and application of the framework which identified language that was less meaningful to the voluntary/not for profit sector and which provided a rough and ready score.
- 4 pilot site meetings using telecom, Skype or Pow Wow Now to review progress, discuss scores and language and to reflect on and learn from each other's approaches.
- Complete a final, complete scoring and further reflection leading to development of a draft action plan with a defined time frame and a lead person
- Continuous self-assessment using the framework.

How long did it take to complete OWLS?

- Six months (which included evaluation of OWLS as a UK pilot site)

What were the benefits of using OWLS?

For our learners:

- Created a pre course questionnaire to identify more effectively learners' outcomes
- Created training content and delivery methods to better meet their needs
- A more enjoyable and relevant learning experience

For our trainers:

- Improved CPD for all VAO staff who deliver training as part of their role
- Improved course design and delivery
- Identified a base line to measure more effectively the outcome of course delivery and content
- Promotion of reflective practice

For the employers and managers we work with:

- Improved communication with and increased understanding of employers and managers needs
- Developed a post course questionnaire circulated three to six months after each learning event to assess the benefit of the learning to the learner and their workplace

For our organisation

- Comprehensive review of and introduction of improvements to the training service
- Improved internal training request system
- Introduction of peer to peer learning
- Recognition in job descriptions of the value of mentoring new staff
- Identification of an area for improvement to assist EFQM revalidation

Would we use OWLS again?

OWLS has proved to be a valuable addition to VAO's regular self assessment programme and has supported revalidation of EFQM therefore it will become a regular feature of our approach to continuous improvement.

For further information about OWLS please visit www.owls-nest.eu