ONLINE COURSE/MODULE PROJECT PLANNING
Business Plan Development for Online Learning

This is a project planning guide for teams developing online learning environments. All of the components relate to each other and are organized in a way that encourages teams to discuss and determine which of the aspects fit with their online project. This planning guide is most helpful when considered prior to engaging in a design and development process.

STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

Determine all of the invested parties
- Which individuals, departments, other University units, or outside organizations will be involved in the design, delivery, approval, and implementation of this project? In what capacities?
- Who will fill roles on your design and development team to utilize a Team Approach[1] that works to the strengths of the group, including: Project Manager, Content Writer(s), Educational Designer, and Evaluation

AUDIENCE PROFILE

Describe the intended audience for your course/module
- Who is your primary audience (To whom will you be writing the content)?
- Who are secondary audiences (may also benefit from the information, but content is not necessarily "written to" this audience) both within your program area/organization and external to it? How large are those audiences? Do you need to keep secondary audience in mind when developing content? NOTE: this will influence scripting and graphics.
- How many learners per year do you expect will take/view your course/module?
  - If a synchronized course, how many offerings and how many learners per offering?
  - If module (self-study format), how will you know how many participate? Do you need to know?
- Where are the target learners for your course located (rural, urban, county, state, national, international)?
  - What is their level of access to web-based learning? Which technology tools work for this audience?
- In what other ways – and through what other course offerings – are your main audiences currently learning the content that is planned for your online course/module? Describe the comparable course offerings, including their formats, costs, and types of access to learners. Identify why an online option will be added.
  - What are strengths and weaknesses of competitive courses?
  - What makes your proposed online course/module unique?
- What motivates the learners and how do they benefit in an online learning experience of this type? (i.e. Certification, credentialing, required for position, CEU's, certificate of attendance, other form of "proof of attendance")

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[1] Robideau, K. & Vogel, E. (2014). *Development Strategies for Online Volunteer Training Modules: A Team Approach*. Journal of Extension [On-line], 52(1), Article 1FEA6.

DELIVERABLES AND TECHNOLOGIES

Provide more specific details about the nature of your planned project
- Deliverables:
  - What is the overall description of the course/module?
  - What are the overall course/module objectives?
    - What is the targeted length of the course/module?
    - Are the description and number of learning objectives realistic with the length of the course?
    - Is the length consistent with audience needs?
- Which technologies will be used to design, develop, and deliver your online course/module (including course management system, web-conferencing software, presentation software, videography, audio)?
    - NOTE: Audience and content drive the technology; it is not a good practice to start with the tool. Determine technology tools based on how audience and scope of content are defined and described.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Plan ahead for use of external references and authorship
- Is any content that will be used in this course owned or copyrighted by other authors or publishers? Do you need permissions? Who will make sure that happens?
- Who/what department on the project will have rights to intellectual property for the course content and delivery?
- Identify first, second, etc. authorship for content writers prior to starting. Create clear, agreed-upon requirements for lead author and how secondary authorship is determined.
- Should the final project be licensed to other institutions/program areas in the future, which individuals, academic units, and offices would have rights to a potential distribution of income?
- Can other institution/program areas use and teach with this resource? Will you need to develop contracts, teach train-the-trainer sessions, etc.?

FUNDING AND OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

Create an intentional and realistic budget
- Design and Development costs/budget:
  - What internal sources of funding and operational needs (staff) are available to support this project?
  - What external grants, foundations, government agencies, or other sources of funding are available?
  - Do you need funding or income to sustain the project and repay money that has been invested? Within what timeframe?
- Ongoing, maintenance costs/budget:
  - What is the pricing strategy?
    - Do you need to generate income for this online educational offering?
    - Based on identified audience, what will/can they pay?
    - How much revenue needs to be generated to offset costs of a fee-based set-up (course registration fees, curriculum cost, train the trainer fees)?
  - Which staff will support the needed infrastructure and maintenance for this course/module? SEE *Staffing and Instructional Support* Section

- Does this online educational offering require registration? Do you need to purchase a system? If internal system, is there a percent-based cost to use it?
- Once the project is developed and available to participants:
    - What funding will be used to sustain the project?
    - Do you need to repay money that has been invested? Within what timeframe?

STAFFING AND INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

Plan ahead for course/module implementation staffing needs. Available resources may influence technology used and scope of project.
- Once the project has been developed, what staffing will be required?
    - Marketing, development and dissemination
    - Registration system, set-up, trouble-shoot
    - Maintenance of course site (i.e. Learning Management System)
    - Trouble-shooting tech challenges for participants (during course)
    - Instructor(s)/Facilitator(s)
        - Who will continue to instruct or facilitate, or answer content questions in self-studies?
        - Development and training to instructors/ facilitator(s)
    - Evaluation
        - Who develops the evaluation?
        - Who collects/downloads evaluation?
        - Who should receive the evaluation data? What will they do with it? NOTE: this helps to determine what questions and how extensive the evaluation is.
    - Maintains , fixes, edits content, as needed
    - Lead course/module review process (3-5 years)

MARKETING AND PUBLICITY

Just because you build it, doesn't mean they will come
- What communication venues (email list serves, website, flyers, etc.) will be used to promote or publicize the online course/module to the target audiences?
- Who will develop communications?
- What resources will support ongoing marketing and publicity?

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

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