Tackling Poverty Locally Online Directory

Advanced Clothing Solutions (ACS) Training and Development

How-to Guide

This guide offers more detailed information and advice for those who may be interested in adopting or adapting the initiative in their local area.

This document comprises the following sections (click hyperlink to skip to that section)

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Title	Advanced Clothing Solutions (ACS) Training and Development Programme.
Organisation	Advanced Clothing Solutions (ACS).
Category	Fully Validated Effective Local Practice.
Poverty Impact	Mitigation., Reduction.
Introduction to the Project	

ACS Training and Development Programme offers a holistic poverty mitigation strategy to diverse populations who may struggle to find employment in normative work environments. The eco-friendly, circular fashion-modelled business utilises accredited training and development to help lift employees out of poverty by providing a living wage and living hours. ACS partner with multiple external agencies including the local government, Skills Development Scotland, local schools, and the Scotland's Qualifications Authority (SQA). They maintain sustainable, green employment through on-site training and development opportunities. This is not only beneficial to the fashion industry, economic growth, and job creation, but also employees and communities.

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Initial Idea

Who had the initial idea?
Anthony Burns (Chief Operating Officer) and Michael Cusack (Head of Sustainability).
How did the idea for the project come about?
ACS wanted to improve productivity, support their staff, reduce turnover, and increase staff skills and qualifications. This occurred several years ago when they did not have health and safety well-documented. They felt that taking this approach would improve both the productivity of the company and the assets and wellbeing of the team involved.
Were plans informed by any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice from elsewhere?
No.
Was anyone else involved in developing the initial idea of the project?
No.
Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?
Yes. Staff volunteers help decide on the topics and form questions for annual engagement surveys. This enables them to have a voice within the company. They also ensure that those working in warehouses have the opportunity to update training and development programmes themselves.
Was funding required to support the development of the initial idea of the project?

No		**Yes**	XXX

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Please provide details of the funding that was used to support the development of the initial idea of the project.	
Which organisation provided funding?	Scottish Enterprise.
How much was required?	Not specified.
What was the specific source of funding? (e.g., particular grant or policy)	Not specified.

Were specific resources – other than funding - needed when developing the initial idea of the project?			
No		**Yes**	XXX

Please provide details of the resources that were required when developing the initial idea of the project.	
Facilities / Workspace	On-site facilities.
Equipment	On-site equipment.
Local Knowledge	Local councils, an external consultant, third party associations such as the UK Fashion and Textile Association, on-site team, and staff members.
Food and Drink	Canteen.

What, if any, barriers had to be overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?
No barriers were identified.

What, if anything, helped enable development of the initial idea of the project?
Networking with internal staff and external agencies.

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How long did it take between having the initial idea and starting the project?
Nine years.
Who made the decision to introduce the project?
Anthony Burns (Chief Operating Officer) and Michael Cusack (Head of Sustainability).

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Early Development – Pilot Project or Feasibility Study

Was there a pilot project or feasibility study?		
	No	XXX
	Yes, a pilot project	
	Yes, a feasibility study	
What did the pilot study or feasibility study involve?		
Although no official pilot was run, ACS did conduct an informal pilot project.		
Who was responsible for the design and/or delivery of the pilot or feasibility study?		
The existing staff base.		
Were those with lived experience of poverty among those involved in the design or delivery of the pilot project or feasibility study		
	No	
	Yes	XXX
Those with lived experience were involved through feedback and informal communications.		

Was funding required to support the pilot project or feasibility study?			
No	XXX	**Yes**	

Were specific resources needed to support the pilot project or feasibility study?			
No		**Yes**	XXX

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Please provide details of the resources that were required for the pilot project or feasibility study.	
Staff/Volunteer Time	Not specified.
Facilities / Workspace	On-site facilities.
Equipment	On-site equipment.
Local Knowledge	Local councils, external consultants, third party associations such as the UK Fashion and Textile Association, on-site team and staff members.
Food and Drink	Canteen.

Was the pilot project or feasibility study evaluated?		
	No	
	Yes	XXX
The project was informally evaluated.		

Was there evidence from the pilot project or feasibility study that confirmed that it was working / it would work?		
	No	
	Yes	XXX
Low staff turnover, staff feedback, increased productivity and job creation.		

Who made the decision to continue with the project beyond the pilot or feasibility study?	
Anthony Burns (Chief Operating Officer) and Michael Cusack (Head of Sustainability).	

Was the design of the project modified following the pilot project or feasibility study?		
	No	XXX
	Yes	
N/A as it was never a formal pilot programme.		

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Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

Is there a referral process?		
	No	
	Yes	XXX
Yes, through Roots to Work, Developing the Young Work Force, North and South Lanarkshire Councils, Glasgow schools, and the Prince's Trust.		
Is referral the only way that potential clients are made aware of the project?		
	Yes	XXX
	No	
Other than referral, how do potential clients come to know about the project?		
N/A as referral is collaborative with local agencies with a focus on upskilling and retraining.		
What is the most common way through which users typically access the service?		
Through the aforementioned referral agencies.		
Do you take steps to keep in touch / reach out to service users?		
	No	
	Yes	XXX
Informal meetings and conversations on-site.		

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Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?		
	No	
	Yes	XXX
Many ACS staff come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and they are often the main and first point of contact for some employees.		
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project or project governance?		
	No	
	Yes	XXX
One staff member with lived experience of poverty is the main point of contact for staff from a disadvantaged background, including those who are part of the ACS Training and Development Programme.		
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved <u>in any other aspect</u> of the project? *If so, please describe below*.		
	No	
	Yes	
Yes. They help with on-site job training and monitoring of staff progress.		

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Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

Who is responsible for managing the project?	
Anthony Burns	

Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project?		
	Yes	
	No	XXX

No. Anthony is involved with everything from sales to operations within the company. He manages everything from a warehouse operations perspective to a supply chain and customer engagement perspective. He helps to realise the physical aspects associated with a circular business model.

Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group?		
	No	XXX
	Yes	

Are any other governance arrangements in place to review strategy and performance?		
	No	
	Yes	XXX

Quarterly statistical reviews allow ACS to reflect on strategy and performance.

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Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

In your opinion, is the project aligned with national and/or local anti-poverty strategies and priorities (e.g., local authority or health board priorities)?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	XXX
The project is part of the Back to Work Strategy, Educational Strategy, Human Rights Strategy, and Youth Employment and Skills Strategy.	
Is the project part of any other strategy?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	XXX
The Circular Business Model Strategy.	
Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment?	
No	XXX
Yes	

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Funding

Has external funding been secured to support the work?		
	No	
	Yes	XXX
Please provide details of the external funding that was used secured to support this work?		
Which organisation provided funding?	Scottish Enterprise (development).	
What was the specific funding stream/source/scheme?	Not specified.	
How much funding was secured?	Not specified.	
For how long has funding been secured?	Not specified.	
Is future funding from the same external source a possibility?		
	Don't know	
	No	
	Yes	XXX
Is future funding from the same external source based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered from this work?		
	No	XXX
	Yes	

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Staffing and Resources

Do existing staff from the host organisation contribute toward the work of this project as part of their broader work for the organisation?		
	No	
	Yes	XXX
The project covers the entire paid workforce at ACS.		
Are existing staff from the host organisation paid extra (for example, taking on extra hours) to contribute toward the work of this project?		
	No	XXX
	Yes	
N/A training is provided to supplement staff knowledge base, and as part of staff working hours remit.		
Are volunteers involved in delivering the project?		
	No	XXX
	Yes	
Are specific resources – other than staff/volunteer time and money - needed to support the delivery of the project?		
No		**Yes** XXX

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Please provide details of the resources that are required to deliver the project?	
Facilities / Workspace	On-site facilities.
Equipment	On-site equipment.
Local Knowledge	Local councils, an external consultant, third party associations such as the UK Fashion and Textile Association, on-site team, and staff members.
Food and Drink	Canteen.

Are any of the resources needed to deliver the project provided in-kind, rather than budgeted from project funds?		
	No	
	Yes	XXX
As detailed in previous section.		

Were new IT systems, additional software, or upgrades existing software (databases, Apps) required to deliver this project?		
	No	
	Yes	XXX
Yes. ACS developed their own Moodle platform and created YouTube videos which did not exist prior to the Training and Development Programme. However, they still utilised existing databases.		

Was additional training – for staff or volunteers - required to deliver this project?		
	No	
	Yes	XXX
Staff completed Scottish Union of Support Employment training.		

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Monitoring and Evaluation

Is there baseline data to describe what things were like before the start of the project?		
	No	
	Yes	XXX
Before, during, and after training statistics.		
Is the difference that the project is making measured or monitored by the host organisation?		
	Yes	XXX
	No	
Who within the host organisation is responsible for monitoring the impact of the project?		
At point of programme access. This data is recorded by ACS project delivery staff on-site.		
How often is the impact of the project monitored or measured by the host organisation?		
At point of access.		

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What information is collected by the host organisation about the project?				
Number of users	Yes	XXX	No	
Profile of users	Yes	XXX	No	
Experience of users	Yes	XXX	No	
Outcomes for users	Yes	XXX	No	
Anything else	Yes	XXX	No	

Demographics.

Has the data that has been collected by the host organisation been used to adapt the way the project works?

No	
Yes	XXX

To improve quality of product delivery, staff knowledge/experiences, and working conditions.

Has an external organisation been employed to formally evaluate the project?

No	
Yes	XXX

SQA formally evaluate the qualification delivery and quality.

Has the insight from the external organisation's evaluation been used to adapt the way the project works?

No	
Yes	XXX

Enhancing the number of training and development modules offered.

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Is there an intention to employ an external organisation to evaluate the impact of the project in the future?	
Don't know / no current plans	
No	
Yes	XXX
Is there an intention to undertake your own formal evaluation in the future to estimate the impact of the project?	
Don't know / no current plans	XXX
No	
Yes	

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Impact

To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?	
Fully met	
Making progress toward meeting Aims	XXX
Not making progress	
Ongoing aims.	

What difference has the project made?
ACS has grown as a business due to their Training and Development Programme. The project has also had a positive social and economic impact by providing sustainable, green jobs with opportunities for training and development. ACS further support their employees by providing a living wage and living hours. The project has also had a positive environmental impact on the fashion industry. During the pandemic, ACS were supported by Home Energy Scotland and the Energy Savings Trust to run educational programmes for staff and their family members. These programmes made a positive impact on those involved, as they learned about saving food, energy, and general living costs.

Have conditions or demand changed since the project was introduced?	
No	
Yes	XXX
Demand for the service has increased over time. There has also been more external collaboration.	

Has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand?	
Yes	XXX
No	

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Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?		
	No	
	Yes	XXX
One outcome is that ACS have received wonderful feedback about the work that they are doing. A by-product of this is increased business and feedback from the government that ACS is a positive reference point for other companies.		
In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty?		
	No	
	Yes	XXX
ACS provide sustainable, green jobs with training and development opportunities, a living wage and living hours to their employees, and has raised employee awareness about the difficulties many face. This undoubtedly has an impact on tackling poverty.		

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Learning from Experience

What is working well?
The whole ACS Training and Development Programme is working well. ACS have a highly diverse employee base, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and staff have provided positive feedback on the Programme. Work and collaboration with different organisations is also working well.

What, if anything, is working less well?
Nothing.

What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners?
It is important to take the initiative with new ideas without delay, but also to take small steps to achieve your goals.
Taking unique approaches to supporting individuals and communities in need pays off. Doing so is mutually beneficial for both service providers and service users.

Are there plans to develop or expand the project in the future?

	No	
	Yes	XXX

ACS want to build on their project but this will not be inherently different from what they are doing right now.

How easily do you think this project could be replicated in another setting?
Easily. The ACS Training and Development Programme is a low-cost, low-effort project with a big pay-off. There is support and funding available for any business that wants to go down a similar route. External consultancy support would likely also be provided.

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