



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

LEARNING COMMUNITIES ONLINE

A SUPPORT HANDBOOK FOR CLUSTER SCHOOLS



Acknowledgements:

Particular thanks go to the following members of the Working Party who brought this handbook to fruition:

Derek Wenmoth - Director elearning Core Education

Eddie Reisch - Senior Analyst, elearning Unit, MOE

Lynda Walsh-Pasco - eDean and eTeacher, OtagoNet

Rachel Roberts - ePrincipal and eTeacher, TaraNet/VLN Primary

Vicki Smith - Facilitator, WestNet

Carolyn Bennett - ePrincipal and eTeacher, FarNet

A special thanks to the contributions from the NZ Virtual Learning Network Community

Published by:



CORE Education Ltd and Ministry of Education

For the online version of this handbook visit:
<http://www.vln.school.nz/lcohandbook>

© **Crown copyright**

All rights reserved

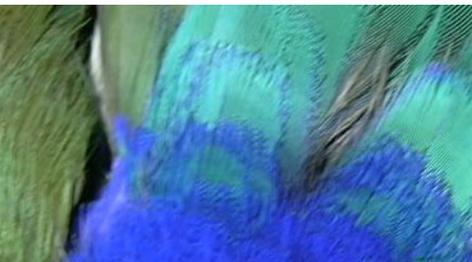
All enquiries should be made to the publisher

February 2011

TABLE OF CONTENTS



 Handbook Introduction	5
Learning Communities Online	6
Virtual Learning	7
School clusters and LCOs	11
The 4 Ps	14
How to use this handbook	15
 Overview Matrix	17
 Phase 1: Proposal	21
 Phase 2: Scoping	27
 Phase 3: Planning	35
 Phase 4: Implementation	43
 Phase 5: Maturity and Sustainability	51
 Glossary	59



HANDBOOK
INTRODUCTION



A group of organisations or individuals that chooses to operate as a collaborative network, utilizing electronic and face-to-face mediums, in order to enhance the learning outcomes and opportunities for students, their whanau and educators.

DEFINITION

The term 'Learning Communities Online' (LCO) was coined in 2002 when the first resource to supports' online collaboration was developed. LCO describes *a group of schools that collaborate to provide enhanced teaching and learning opportunities for staff and students across electronic networks.*

The choice of words was very intentional, with each word in the title having significance:

- **Learning** – this must always be the primary focus of these communities. The emphasis here is on the emerging pedagogical practices that must be explored and adopted in the networked school, and on the outcomes that are sought for learners. This also recognises that teachers are also learners in this system, and that provision must be made for them to access learning opportunities in this way.
- **Community** – a networked school is more likely to succeed if it acts as part of a collaborative community. The term community here embraces the notions of participation, trust, agreement and purpose. Individual schools may be a part of several communities, and each will be defined differently by its purpose and the roles of those within it. For most it is likely that there will be a primary community, one defined by geography or special character, to which an individual school will belong.
- **Online** – a defining feature of a networked school is that much of the activity will take place in the online environment. This will include both synchronous and asynchronous activity, using a wide range of technologies - including video conferencing, webinars, learning management systems and Web2.0 tools. Online access should embrace both the use of specific access end points in a school and provision for ubiquitous access by students from anywhere, at any time using any device.

BENEFITS

There are a range of reasons why schools may choose to be a part of an LCO, including:

- providing greater access to curriculum choices for students
- providing access to subject matter experts to enhance school-based learning
- participation in virtual field trips
- engaging students in collaborative projects
- supporting gifted and talented students by enabling them to connect with others with similar skills and interests
- sharing (both accessing and contributing) a wide range of rich and current resources to support learning
- providing professional learning opportunities for teachers, including virtual staff meetings etc.

Whatever the reason, there are considerable benefits that can be realised from making this sort of commitment, including:

- retention of students who may otherwise choose to go elsewhere for their education
- retention of specialist staff who are now able to teach in their specialist area, rather than taking 'filler' classes to make up a teaching load
- access to experts in subject areas not available locally
- sharing of resources, resulting in lower costs and increased relevance and use
- provision of high interest, relevant and authentic learning experiences for students.

We live in an age of 'collaberation', where the traditional view of schools as being in **competition** with one another must be balanced against the considerable benefits of **collaboration** and supporting each others' work. Commitment to being a part of a LCO is one way of achieving this.



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Education in the 21st Century will undoubtedly be different from what we experienced in the 20th Century. The differences are likely to be evident in all areas, including what is being learned, how it is being learned, as well as when and where learning takes place. These changes will be driven by, and reflective of a range of factors, including developments in technology, the increased emphasis on student choice and autonomy, increasingly diverse cultural and social needs of students and communities.

Schools are increasingly under pressure to respond to these influences, to ensure that they remain relevant in the new millennium, and are able to meet students' and society's needs. While there is no set answer to what is required, it is clear that a greater degree of collaboration and cooperation between and among schools will be essential.

The Ministry of Education is currently reviewing and developing their policies in a range of areas in an effort to support and assist schools in making choices about change. This handbook is a part of the process of policy development and with it comes the opportunity to contribute to this policy development through participation in the online forums associated with the online version of this handbook.

Background

The original LCO handbook was created in 2002¹ as a guide for rural secondary schools in New Zealand that were exploring the use of video conferencing as a means of expanding access to course options for students. It was intended to provide a structured approach to the process of establishing the necessary environment within the school, and to provide practical advice and guidance in specific areas.

The handbook was reviewed in 2005 by members of the Virtual Learning Network (VLN) community, after the network had grown and the scope of what was being provided began to expand - this included courses from tertiary institutions and offerings for some primary schools.

This revision broadens the scope even further, recognising that the environment for online learning is providing significant opportunities for all schools, in terms of who participates, what is provided, and how it is delivered. In addition, this handbook is supplemented by an online environment providing access to a rich collection of resources, case studies and forums for the exchange of ideas and advice.

The Virtual Learning Network (VLN)

During the late 1990s and early 2000s clusters of schools began to emerge in different parts of New Zealand. Driven by the need to provide access to wider curriculum choices for their students, these schools found ways of sharing classes and teachers between them, connected first by audio-graphics technologies and then video conferencing.

Most of these clusters were geographically defined, located in rural and provincial parts of New Zealand. Most combined regular online links with periodic face-to-face visits and exchanges – creating a 'blended' approach to learning for students.

By the early 2000s some of the clusters began to explore sharing courses and classes between clusters where those courses couldn't be provided for within the cluster itself. It became clear that there would be significant benefit in providing some sort of 'brokerage' service that enabled schools and clusters to explore and access courses available available in other clusters across the country, and act as an 'introduction service' to begin the process of being able to access some of these courses.

So was born the Virtual Learning Network (VLN), initially providing a course brokerage and scheduling service to schools, but soon expanding to provide support and professional development opportunities for online teachers, and the inclusion of an ever- increasing range of courses and programmes from a range of providers.

The strength of the VLN is the community that 'owns' and supports it. The VLN can be described as a form of educational co-operative, where the members are those who help guide and influence its development. This initiative was greatly enhanced in 2008 with two years of financial and mentoring support from the Ministry of Education for the establishment of full-time e-Principal positions.

These were provided to already established clusters involved in the VLN to work together as a national group to take responsibility and leadership for, not only their own clusters, but for providing leadership in the VLN. Since 2010, when the funding from the Ministry for these positions finished, schools have been required to fund these positions through a range of funding models.²

- 1 Special acknowledgements go to the original developers of this handbook for their vision and insight:
Carol Moffatt (*Ministry of Education*) | Derek Wenmoth (*Correspondence School*) | Chris Allott-McPhee (*Correspondence School*) | Eddie Reisch (*Correspondence School*) | Angela Tapa-Pehi (*KAWM*) | Ken Pullar (*OtagoNet*) | Jude Elliot (*Cantatech*)
- 2 The current VLN website is <http://www.virtuallearning.school.nz>. A new VLN website is under development at <http://www.vln.school.nz>

Ultra-Fast Broadband (UFB)

Telecommunications technologies remain the key enabler of the networked school vision. In the early days of audio-graphics, connections were made through existing telephone lines – usually requiring two lines - one for the audio, and the other for the graphical interface. With video conferencing came the demand for more bandwidth. This was a key driver for project PROBE³, providing broadband to every school in the country, mostly through an ADSL⁴ line. Video conferencing equipment used was optimized for this speed of connection, providing an adequate level of service to be able to conduct online lessons.

The Government's plans to roll out fibre across New Zealand include a commitment to provide ultra-fast broadband access to 97% of New Zealand schools by 2016. The remainder in regions too remote for fibre will receive improved broadband speeds via satellite or point to point wireless.

Ultra-fast broadband will provide the opportunity for schools to use next generation services such as high definition (HD) video conferencing and streaming TV. It will also allow learners to create and share video and multi-media resources across the network in real time.

In a number of urban areas around New Zealand, fibre networks have already been established using this technology – for example Auckland's North Shore, Wellington, Nelson and Christchurch. These urban fibre networks connect schools and other education institutions, allowing participating schools to access a range of online services and resources not previously available. These early adopters are already exploring the benefits of collaborating online, including expanded course options for students, and opportunities for teachers to share their expertise in specialist areas.

Such developments will see the concepts and practices of the VLN grow and expand so that they embrace all schools in New Zealand, not just those in rural and provincial areas. In addition, the ability to connect at ultra-fast speeds means that schools in NZ will be able to access and participate meaningfully in a range of international learning opportunities.

The age of the networked school has arrived.

In an era where schools are finding themselves having to respond to demands of student choice and personalisation, the rapid expansion in the adoption and use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), and the constraints of resources, staffing and physical space, there is a need to think more expansively about how schools might operate into the future. Our existing structures are becoming increasingly challenged as access to knowledge becomes more ubiquitous, and the traditional roles of teachers and schools are questioned. Students (and their parents/whanau), in their quest to gain access to the learning experiences that matter for them, are caught in the tension between staying at their local school where they can remain linked with their local community and friends, or moving to a school where they might be able to access programmes more suited to their needs.

The phenomenon of virtual learning is being embraced in a number of countries around the world as a part of the solution. The concept is simple – the place students are located can be different from the place where the learning is provided. For those in school, the schools remain an important physical 'home' for the student, a place where social activity is promoted, and students are given access to the support and resources they require to help them learn – but their actual learning (i.e. their subjects or courses) may be provided from a range of places outside the school. We've accepted this for nearly a century with Correspondence School courses – whether they are provided to students in remote locations learning from their kitchen table, or those in schools who are unable to access a particular course or courses they need.

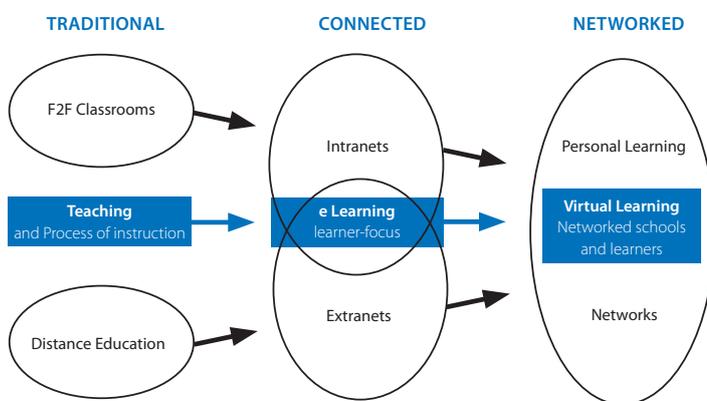
Virtual learning is the term now used to describe this separation of *place* of learning from the *source* of the instruction or learning. Where, in the past, we may have thought of this as a separate part of the education system, there is an increasing convergence that will eventually see virtual learning considered a natural part of what schools are about.

³ Provincial Broadband Extension (PROBE) a collaborative effort by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Economic Development to provide every school in New Zealand with broadband connectivity at 256kb/s

⁴ Asynchronous Subscriber Digital Line (ADSL)

Virtual learning is one of the activities that take place within a network of schools. The term networked school describes an institution that exists as an independent entity, yet is integrally linked with other schools and agencies in order to provide the services and programmes that meet its learners' needs. Digital technologies play a key part in the development of networked schools, creating a new, rich networked learning environment for students - gradually transforming the nature of schooling.

The diagram below illustrates the way in which things have changed and are likely to change in the future.



Diag 1: Development of learning paradigms

As schools grapple with the implications of this convergence of teaching and learning paradigms, new opportunities emerge that will enable them to re-examine the ways in which they provide educational programmes for their students. Through the planned and strategic use of ICT, teachers, and students can begin to experience being part of a wider learning community, where access to learning opportunities is not limited by the time and place-bound availability of a teacher or resources.

The table on the following page expands on the characteristics of each phase in the development.

	TRADITIONAL SCHOOL	CONNECTED SCHOOL	NETWORKED SCHOOL
Nature of school	Schools perceived as physical sites of learning. Face-to-face instruction regarded as the 'norm'. Distance education regarded as inferior substitute for face-to-face classes. Schools as autonomous units, catering for all the needs of their students.	Schools remain as physical sites of learning, with emerging models of connectivity between and among school sites. E-enabled opportunities for learning embraced in traditional settings. Schools as collaborating units, negotiating areas of collaboration.	Networks of schools and learners – accepted models of differentiation between places to learn and sources of learning and instruction. Schools as nodes on a network – integrally connected as consumers and contributors. Ubiquitous presence - complete integration of physical/virtual nature of school.
Technology	Technology appropriated by schools in an additive manner. Schools/teachers decide how and when it is used. Online environments used for resource location – the “online encyclopaedia”.	Technology appropriated by schools to create new learning and teaching opportunities. Student access and use a priority. Online learning environments appropriated for use as: Intranets in schools, providing student access to resources and support. Extranets (e.g. Learning management systems (LMS)) for distance education provision as parent portal.	Student appropriation of technology – they choose what, where, when and how it is used. Online environments managed by learners using existing and emerging social networking features.
Teacher role(s)	Teacher's primary role is instructor. Teachers are generalists – including subject matter expert, pastoral care, programme designers and managers.	Role of teacher changing to facilitator, guide, mentor etc. Emergence of specialist teacher roles (subject matter experts, 'e'-principals etc.)	Role of teacher as 'experienced' learner – participant in the learning process. Teachers as specialists: 'e'-teachers, 'm'-teachers and 'c'-teachers.
Organisation of learners	Focus on teaching classes of students in age-based groupings.	Focus on teaching classes of students in age-based groupings.	Vertical groupings of students, with focus on interest/ability groups – stage, not age.
Curriculum	Curriculum tends to be factual, knowledge-based. Organisation of knowledge into 'subjects', and presented as courses.	Competency-based curriculum, framework of qualifications. Subjects and courses remain, with increased use of themes and integration.	Emergent and 'negotiated' curriculum. Lots of options and choices, with a granular approach.
Learning/ instructional design	Emphasis on teacher-centred instruction and 'delivery'.	Emphasis on personalizing learning, and on understanding acts of learning.	Emphasis on student-centred learning and 'participation'. Focus on 'mass personalisation' to address issues of scale and sustainability.
Resources for learning	Copyrighted, 'owned' Authoritative Expensive Require physical storage Need to 'endure' as physical artefacts.	Increasing sharing of resources based on issues of cost and currency of information. Move to electronic access and storage	Open education resources Creative commons licensing Available from the 'cloud' Always current Includes teacher created and student created resources
Learning activity	Learning in artificial, isolated contexts. Learning as a passive activity – meeting external expectations.	Learning as an active process – directed by/with students.	Learning in authentic, real-world contexts.
Assessment of learning	Tests and external assessments to meet standards set by examiners. Paper-based end of year assessments prevail.	Mix of internal and external assessments. Standards-based approaches, with rubrics outlining levels of achievement supported by evidence	Students set learning goals and participate in development of rubrics. Life-long portfolios of evidence owned and managed by learners.

Table 1: Feature comparison in education paradigms

SCHOOL CLUSTERS AND LCOS



Schools linking together as clusters are not a new thing. Clusters have formed in the past for a variety of reasons, including professional development, sharing of resources, or for sporting or cultural linkages etc.

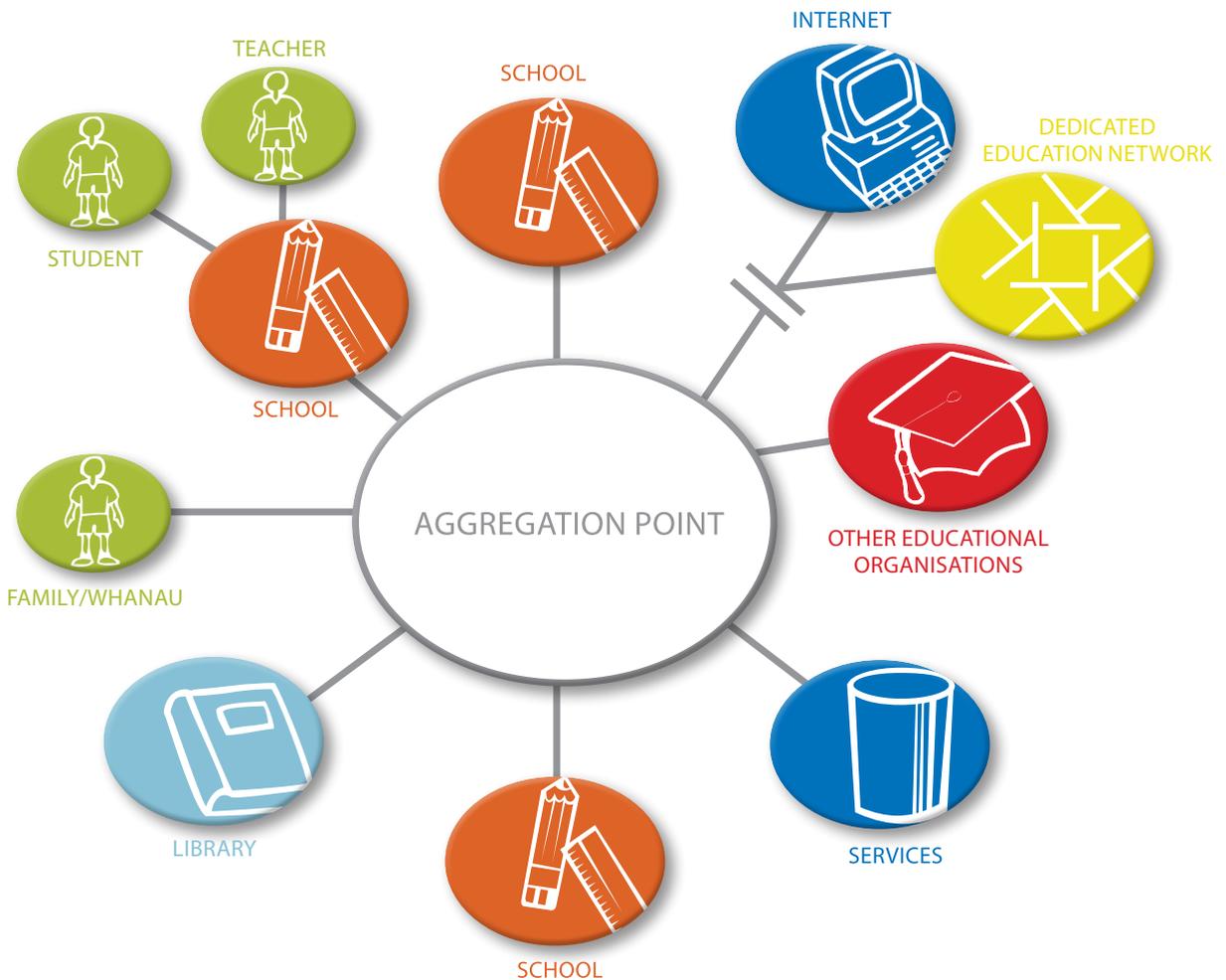
Learning communities online (LCOs) have emerged where two things are present:

- A commitment to collaborate in meeting the learning needs of students, and;
- An enabling set of technologies and infrastructure.

Typically, the choice of infrastructure and technology has been addressed after the commitment to collaborate has been made.

As we see the spread of Ultra-fast Broadband (UFB) around New Zealand, schools are finding themselves connected to a high speed infrastructure and clusters are being defined by the region they belong to. These schools are now exploring the opportunities this provides for collaboration and becoming a learning community online.

The following diagram provides a way of visualising what is happening.



Diag 2: School clusters and LCOs - concept and relationships



SCHOOLS

The central focus in the LCO is the school, which in turn, is catering for the needs of learners in terms of access and services.

Schools once were responsible for all aspects of the learner's learning - including subject expertise, learning to learn, learning support, careers guidance, counselling, social, cultural and emotional development. It is now possible to separate some of these things out so that learners have access to them from the right people at the right time.

Schools will remain important as the physical place of meeting, and where significant personal, social, and cultural learning opportunities are provided. However it is the collective of schools in the LCO that will ensure all learners needs are met.



SERVICES

Once connected to a high speed network, schools can have access to a range of services that do not need to reside within the school's own network space, including:

Content services, e.g.

- streaming video
- online storage

Learning services, e.g.

- online PD
- online projects
- portfolios

Management services, e.g.

- student management system
- learning management system
- financial and accounting system

Support Services, e.g.

- back-up and failover
- online support
- remote hosting

Internet services, e.g.

- internet service provider (ISP)
- security
- filtering

The Virtual Learning Network (VLN) is an essential service to schools in this mix.



AGGREGATION POINT

The aggregation point in a local network is like the exchange in a telephone network. It is the point that connects all of the schools and users with all of the services that schools may want to connect with. The aggregation point will also provide the link to the point of presence (POP) for the internet and the dedicated education network in the local region.



LIBRARY

The library icon represents a range of public utilities and services that can be linked to an urban fibre network and thus be accessed by schools. In some circumstances, local library services can be integrated with a school library collection so that users experience a seamless integration of services in their quest for information. The National Library also has a significant role to play here.



INTERNET

Commodity, (publicly accessible), internet has been used by schools for some time now. A variety of internet service providers (ISPs) provide commodity internet and associated services (i.e. filtering, security etc.).

Information travelling over the internet is a little like traffic on the roads. Its flow will be determined by the number of lanes, traffic signals and the volume of traffic travelling at any one time.



OTHER EDUCATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

This icon represents the range of other educational organizations that may provide teaching and learning services across the network. Examples of organizations that may have a contribution to make here include:

- Universities
- Polytechnics
- Te Papa and other museums

The relationship with community education and vocational education programmes is also represented here.

These links open up new opportunities for career planning and life-long learning connections for learners beyond life at school.



DEDICATED EDUCATION NETWORK

The Government is investigating the viability of a dedicated education network that could potentially provide all New Zealand schools with high speed online access to education and administrative content and services. There are many examples of education networks globally for example CalREN in the US and nen.govt.uk.

A 'National Education Network' trial involving approximately 100 New Zealand schools is currently underway and will inform the development of this network if the Government decides to proceed (a decision is expected later in 2011).



LEARNERS

The learner in this diagram can represent anyone in the community who is active in the learning process – including:

- students
- teachers
- family/whanau

Learners access to the network is shown as coming through the school connection, or directly from the place they live – the key is flexibility and ubiquity. With services (including applications and content) available in the 'cloud', and not locked inside a school's network, access can be available from anywhere, at any time.



Activity within and among LCO is shown below as the '4-Ps':



PROGRAMMES

Programmes of learning are provided for students who may not otherwise be able to access them in the school they are attending. These are generally a part of the formal educational provision.

Examples of programmes include:

- A full year's programme in a particular subject area (particularly at senior secondary level).
- Specialist programmes for identified groups of students, (e.g. gifted and talented, extension maths etc.)
- Specialist tuition or coaching in a certain area, (e.g. music, languages, art, scholarship mentoring.)
- A block or semester course offered by a tertiary provider as part of a Secondary and Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR), Gateways, or Careers placement.



PROJECTS

Projects refer to special interest topics or themes that are usually for a fixed period of time and involving a high level of collaboration. Projects are usually one-off events, and are less formal in terms of organisation and commitment than programmes.

Examples of projects include:

- Students from several schools collaborating to explore a global issue and find a local solution (e.g. bullying, global warming, urban wastelands etc.).
- Virtual field trips to areas of interest.
- Gathering data from a variety of sources to develop big picture trends and patterns (eg water quality, weather patterns, pollution levels).
- Connecting with authors and illustrators for a virtual 'book week'.



PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

While much of the attention in planning for LCO development is focused on the needs of students, there are significant opportunities for staff as well to engage in areas of professional learning.

Examples of PL activity may include:

- Virtual staff meetings with invited experts.
- Scheduled online PD to develop specific skills or knowledge (e.g. ICT skills or introducing a new assessment method).
- Participation in national or international PD events, including webinars, online conferences etc..
- Access to formal qualifications through online providers.
- On-going mentoring of action-research projects.



PARTICIPATION

At the heart of all activity within an LCO is the active participation of teachers and school leaders that takes place in and around the three types of activity listed above. The connections that are provided by the online technologies enable a wide range of engagements that would otherwise occur as a part of the face-to-face organisation within a stand-alone school, but can now be facilitated among and between schools.

A successful LCO will operate with (among others) the following values of participation:

- **Reciprocity** – captures the essence of what an LCO is all about - a relationship of mutual dependence or action or influence.
- **Contribution** – understanding that participation is about what can be given to the collective, not simply what can be taken or accessed from it.
- **Respect** – maintaining a mutual understanding of the value of others' contributions, demonstrated through acknowledged use of resources etc.

Types of participation referred to in this area may include:

- virtual syndicate/department/curriculum meetings – linking staff with common areas of interest where they may be the only ones in their school (eg maths teachers, literacy/ numeracy specialists etc).
- collaborative planning and resource development.
- mentoring and support in identified areas of need, including the induction of new principals or senior staff.



WHO IS IT FOR?

This handbook is intended for use by school leaders and anyone else with an interest in, or responsibility for, the development of a Learning Community Online, including:

- principals
- Boards of Trustees
- senior staff with responsibility for LCO development
- teachers interested in participating in an LCO
- existing LCOs for reflection and development
- tertiary providers or Private Training Establishments.

HOW TO USE IT

The focal point for this handbook is the matrix diagram on page 15. This matrix provides a big picture view of the phases of LCO development and is intended to guide you through the specific things you should consider.

Down the left hand side of the matrix are the 10 dimensions, each of which needs to be considered carefully. Early experience revealed that some clusters put a lot of energy into thinking about the technology required, for instance, but neglected to focus on the needs of staff and professional development required. Maintaining a focus on all 10 dimensions is important in order to achieve a situation that is mature and sustainable (phase 5).

Across the top of the matrix are the five phases of development:

- 1 – Proposal
- 2 – Scoping
- 3 – Planning
- 4 – Implementation
- 5 – Maturity-sustainability

At the bottom of each column is a specific goal or action to be taken that marks the successful conclusion of that phase. These actions should be completed before moving onto the next stage. Although this implies a rather linear use of the handbook (which will be helpful for those starting out on the process), the matrix does provide an opportunity to look at specific areas as required at various stages along the journey.

At the intersection point of each of the dimensions and phase is a summary of the key focus of activity to be completed in this area. This links to information found on the following pages in the handbook, each of which is colour coded and sequenced for ease of use. These pages contain the overview of what should be done, list specific actions to be considered and the outcome you should be seeking to achieve. Each page also contains reference to resources that may help. These can be found by visiting the online environment associated with this handbook (see below).

A LIVING DOCUMENT

The guidance provided in this handbook has been assembled and contributed by the community of people who have been actively engaged in teaching and learning in the online environment as a part of an LCO for some years now. The advice is practical and links to examples and resources that stem from practice.

The intent is for this handbook to be a 'living' document.

This is achieved in two ways:

1. The print version of the handbook is designed to be assembled in a folder that can be added to, with space on each of the pages for user notes and comments so that it becomes a living document in the context of the local school where it is being used.
2. The handbook is also available online, and is created in an environment where members of the user community can contribute to the resources and ideas that support its use in schools.

You are encouraged to become a part of the LCO handbook community by linking to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcohandbook> and creating an account. Your contributions will ensure that the advice and guidance provided is kept fresh and relevant to the wide community of practitioners in the Virtual Learning Network.



OVERVIEW

MATRIX

OVERVIEW MATRIX

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
DIMENSION	PROPOSAL	SCOPING	PLANNING	IMPLEMENTATION	MATURITY SUSTAINABILITY
Relationships and Communications	<p>Develop a Philosophical Context</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Identify Community of Interest</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Establish Purpose</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Set Goals and Principles</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Agree Membership</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Explore Funding Opportunities</p> <p>↓</p>	Identify key stakeholders and leadership group, establish communication networks, and confirm shared vision and principles.	Ensure regular, effective communication with stakeholders.	Use and, where necessary, modify or augment existing communication channels.	Develop and enhance relationships both within the cluster and outside the cluster.
Learner Needs		Carry out a learning needs analysis to identify the range of learning opportunities required.	Ensure learner needs are identified and addressed in an ongoing manner.	Provide ongoing support for learners in this environment.	Review current teaching and learning practices to ensure learner needs are met.
Logistical Coordination		Complete an investigation of other LCO and cluster models.	Establish staff appointment procedures. Identify and appoint staff to key positions.	Confirm shared timetables, calendars, and protocols for sharing with staff and students.	Working with others outside the cluster.
Professional Development and Support		Identify strengths and professional development needs of schools.	Establish initial professional development (induction) programme.	Establish ongoing professional development within a community of practice.	Maintain programmes of regular professional learning opportunities for teachers.
Pedagogy		Identify current and desired teaching practices online.	Develop a professional learning programme focussed on student-centred learning.	Ensure teaching practices are reflective and changing from traditional to blended learning.	Establish a culture that accommodates changing pedagogical practice.
Technical Coordination		Conduct a technical audit, and identify technical needs.	Obtain advice and explore technical support options.	Ongoing and effective support processes are in place.	Developing strategies for review and adoption of new and emerging technologies.
Learning and Teaching Resources		Conduct a review of appropriate learning resources, identify gaps and future needs.	Make decisions about how to access and develop appropriate teaching and learning resources.	Establish and implement a shared resource library for digital and non-digital resources.	Regularly review teaching and learning resources to ensure they are current and up to date.
Administration and Support Strategies		Identify, support, management and leadership personnel.	Establish LCO level management team and systems.	Maintain cluster level management team and systems.	Regularly review systems to ensure LCO management is sustainable.
Finance/Funding		Explore existing funding models and draft budgetary requirements.	Coordinate financial systems within and between schools. Finalise budget.	Agree to and meet regular accounting milestones.	Develop a 3–5 year financial plan to support strategic plan.
Evaluation and Strategic Planning		Identify appropriate evaluation processes.	Identify specific outcomes/indicators against which to measure success toward the goals of the LCO.	Integrate goals into participating Organisations' strategic plans and validate these through regular milestone reporting.	Implement a self-review process aligned with meeting cluster goals and strategic planning.
OUTCOME	Commitment to proceed.	Commitment to participate.	Action plan ratified and resourcing allocated.	LCO operational.	LCO remains fresh and self renewing.



PHASE ONE

PROPOSAL

PHASE 1: Proposal



The purpose of the proposal phase is to explore whether there is enough support to begin the process of developing a learning community online. The six stages in this process do not match the dimensions used for the other four phases. Instead, they are intended to guide school leaders through the process of gaining support and a commitment to proceed through to the formal scoping phase.

Focus:

- Developing a shared philosophical context.
- Identify community of interest.
- Establish purpose.
- Set goals and principles.
- Agree on community membership.
- Exploring funding opportunities.

Outcome:

Agreement among the group to proceed to a more formal planning phase. May involve the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), outlining a shared commitment to proceed in a collaborative manner. Schools may need to place a small amount of money or staffing component in a common pool to enable those representing them to carry out the range of activities included in the scoping phase.

NOTES

DEVELOP A PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT



Focus:

Explore your shared vision and values in forming a Learning Community Online (LCO).



Explanation:

The reason for establishing an LCO should be grounded in sound educational thinking. It should have as its goal improved learning outcomes focusing on improving the learning experience and opportunities for the students involved. A statement that reflects this philosophical context should be developed and shared among potential cluster participants as part of the 'buy-in' process, so that there is a clear, shared understanding that underpins the establishment of the LCO. Consider the following as you develop this statement:

- What are your shared beliefs about teaching and learning, including:
 - effective pedagogical approaches
 - teacher/learner roles
 - assessment strategies.
- How are these beliefs affected when considering:
 - education at a distance
 - providers 'untested' by your school or student body.
- What is the primary purpose for establishing this LCO, for example:
 - access to curriculum for senior students
 - participation in global learning projects
 - provision of specialist teaching input
 - access to ongoing professional development.



Action:

Collaboratively develop a shared statement of the purpose and philosophical understandings for your LCO.

Consider the following questions with your potential community members:

- How do you see an LCO model benefitting your school, staff and students?
- What are the advantages of sharing staff expertise, resources, roles etc over a wider campus than just one school?
- What are barriers to achieving this?
- Is there currently 'competition' between any of the schools that may raise issues?

- Is your proposal based primarily on meeting the needs of students, or is it opportunistic in terms of the availability of the technology, staffing? (ie. What is really driving this proposal?).
- What do you see as possible benefits to staff from the establishment of this LCO? (eg. virtual staffrooms, staff support networks, professional development opportunities, resource sharing and moderation, team teaching opportunities, access to expertise and 'outside the classroom' experiences to enhance classroom programmes, increased skill/capability, shared intranets and/or infrastructure etc).
- How might the establishment of an LCO infrastructure be used to benefit groups throughout your wider community? (eg. iwi, farmer/interest groups, medical centres, local industry groups, early and continuing education centres including libraries, councils and administrative bodies, tertiary providers etc).
- What are the opportunities for LCO relationships to be used to foster learning opportunities for learners at all levels of the school? (e.g. early childhood/junior classes, adult education programmes, staff professional development and higher education, careers / life education / vocational and Education Outside The Classroom (EOTC) programmes).

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

IDENTIFY COMMUNITY OF INTEREST

Focus:

Identify a cluster of schools with shared interests and needs.

Explanation:

Careful thought must be given to the grouping of learning organisations that might participate in a Learning Community Online (LCO). A key factor likely to ensure the long term life of an LCO, and therefore the level of ongoing commitment, are the points of commonality that encourage natural alliances. This may be as a result of existing networking relationships - for instance, membership of a local principals' association. Such groups might be considered to represent a geographic community of interest. Alternatively, they may reflect special character networks or educational philosophy, such as schools that teach in Te Reo Māori, Catholic schools, or Montessori schools.

The size of the cluster is also important. Too many schools may make it logistically difficult to manage, while too few may not provide the necessary economy of scale to achieve the breadth of opportunity that is expected. Experience would suggest that 6 to 10 would be an ideal range, especially in the first few years, although as the clusters develop and mature this would of course change and evolve. Economically, larger communities might be more effective once established.

It should be noted here that some groups could first explore the possibility of joining an existing LCO if this meets their needs, or alternatively establish a satellite LCO with an existing cluster as they grow and develop a new independent cluster.

Action:

- Identify areas of common interest for the establishment of the LCO.
- Explore the range of existing opportunities before developing a new LCO.
- Identify people who will be key drivers in your initial leadership group.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

ESTABLISH PURPOSE

Focus:

Discuss and establish the purpose for forming a LCO.

Explanation:

Like the philosophical context, a clear articulation of the purpose of the LCO needs to be given. This should clearly place the needs of students first, reflecting how the establishment of the LCO will provide better educational opportunities for these students while they remain in their local school.

Considerations here include:

- Is there a particular group of students/teachers as the benefit target? (e.g. year12/13, disadvantaged, poor literacy, gifted/extension, ICT in the classroom)?
- Is there a long-term need, or is this only a short-term solution?
- How might the community develop beyond the immediate goals?
- How will the establishment of this LCO contribute to the charter goals of the participating schools?

Action:

- Decide on the purposes of the LCO.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

SET GOALS AND PRINCIPLES



Focus:

Develop an agreed set of goals and principles for the LCO.



Explanation:

Once the above aspects have been considered, a succinct list of goals and principles for the cluster should be established. These may be altered or added to during future planning phases, but will serve to provide the basis upon which the members of the proposed LCO may proceed. This list will also serve as a key point of communication with the various school staff, BOTs and other stakeholders. Considerations here include:

Goals:

- who is this intended to benefit? How?
- will the benefits be only school or community based?
- economies of scale to provide what individual schools find difficult.

Principles:

- quality, expanded and flexible education provision
- learner-centred pedagogy
- professional collaboration
- access to technology, resources and expertise
- enhancement to classroom programmes
- building a community of lifelong learners
- development of strategies and resources to enhance and enrich underpinning values and beliefs.

Key Questions:

- what will be the priority if funding is limited?
- what happens if too many/too few schools want to participate?
- what happens if key personnel leave /are over-committed?



Action:

- establish a list of agreed goals for the LCO
- negotiate a set of agreed principles to guide the development and operation of the LCO.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

AGREE ON MEMBERSHIP



Focus:

Establish membership of the community.



Explanation:

A clear understanding of who will participate is now important so that a commitment to proceed to the next stage can be made. Once participating members are agreed, key contacts within each school should be identified, and a regular, reliable and effective communication method established between those contacts.

In addition to identifying the learning organisations and contacts, it may be possible that other collectives within the community might benefit from the establishment of this network e.g. community groups, medical centres, local industry groups, early and continuing education institutions. A comprehensive canvassing of potential 'partners' in this initiative is advised at this stage, including both educational and non-educational. It is important that an open process of consultation is considered, as a closed approach may lead to the alienation of groups or individuals who are potentially critical partners in the venture.



Action:

- Establish the potential membership in formation of a community.
- Identify key contact people.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

EXPLORE POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES



Focus:

Explore possible funding sources.



Explanation:

The establishment of an LCO will require the commitment of additional funding to provide for both the initial scoping, start-up costs (installation of hardware, software, etc.) and the ongoing maintenance costs (ISP and telecommunications charges, cluster coordination/management, staff professional development/student support etc.). Although too early in the process to make any formal commitments, it is advisable that potential sources of funding are explored at this stage, as this is likely to be one of the key questions that come up when schools are invited to make a commitment to proceed with the proposal.



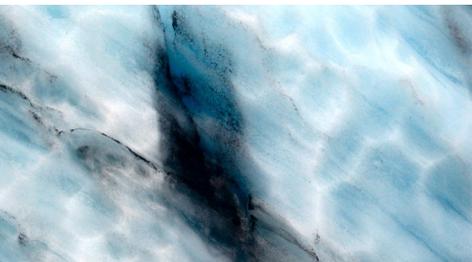
Action:

- Research possible funding sources and scope proposals to take to possible funding sources.
- Where appropriate make initial approaches to potential funders.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

OUTCOMES: Commitment to proceed

Agreement among the group to proceed to a more formal planning phase. May involve the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), outlining a shared commitment to proceed in a collaborative manner. Schools may need to place a small amount of money or staffing component in a common pool to enable those representing them to carry out the range of activities included in the scoping phase.



PHASE TWO

SCOPING

PHASE 2: Scoping



Once there is a commitment to proceed, and a level of 'buy-in' reached among potential stakeholders, the scoping phase can begin. The purpose of this phase is to fully scope what will be required for the LCO to form and operate. The scoping activities may be undertaken internally by members of the community, or by an independent consultant who can provide a degree of independence.

The commitment to proceed to the next phase may involve a financial contribution from each participating school or organisation to support the work that will be required in coming up with a detailed plan.

Also important in the scoping process is to draw on the experience of other LCOs that are already formed and operating – their experience and insights may save a lot of time and wasted effort in establishing a new LCO.

The perspectives of parents/whanau and students must not be neglected in this phase, as their needs must be paramount in terms of defining the intent and nature of the LCO formation.

Focus:

- Establish communications networks.
- Shared vision and values.
- Needs analysis among learner cohort.
- Investigation of other LCO models.
- Professional development needs.
- Technology audits and reviews.
- Funding models and indicative budget.

Outcome:

Commitment from members of the group to participate in the planning and further development of the LCO. This may be formalised through a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between Boards of Trustees.

NOTES

RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATIONS



Focus:

Identify key stakeholders and leadership group, establish communication networks, and confirm shared vision and principles.



Explanation:

A Learning Community Online (LCO) is based on a shared vision where schools see a common solution through working cooperatively. A shared vision and guiding principles provide the structure and support that is needed when developing goals and working through any subsequent issues. It is essential that strong working relationships be established at the outset. It is vital that all school principals are totally committed to the process, working closely with the LCO leadership group, and actively supporting the goals of the LCO within their own schools. Without this commitment from principals then successful outcomes will be limited, as borne out in cluster research.



Action:

Identify a **leadership group** of highly committed individuals, including principals who will drive the development of the LCO. Innovative leaders within a school should be identified as part of this group as this is not necessarily the domain of a lead ICT teacher. Aim for a balance of school leadership, innovative teachers, elearning experience and representation from across the schools. This group could also include representation of key stakeholders. Bear in mind the need for this group to be reasonably small to be effective and agile.

Identify potential stakeholders:

- **Teaching and learning:** students, teachers, parents, whanau, the community.
- **Education support:** other cluster representatives, Virtual Learning Network community, other local schools and education institutions including early childhood, Ministry of Education, tertiary organisations and private training establishments.
- **Financial:** BOTs, principals, community trusts, sponsors, Ministry of Education, service clubs, community groups.

Establish communication between members of leadership group, schools, and stakeholders. Agree on meeting schedules well in advance, where possible making use of existing meetings. Meetings can be a variety of face to face, audio, video or web conferencing as the needs of the group determine. Establish email lists for communication and develop a shared online space for asynchronous discussion, online collaboration and sharing of documents.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

LEARNER NEEDS



Focus:

Carry out a learning needs analysis to identify the range of learning opportunities required.



Explanation:

The primary purpose of an LCO should be to improve the learning outcomes and extend the learning opportunities for their students. Schools therefore need to identify the needs of their students that may not be currently met within their own system. Once an understanding of student needs is gained then schools can begin to explore how collaborations through an LCO can be developed to help meet those needs. For some schools these needs may be very obvious such as in the senior secondary area where students are not able to study the subjects they wish through lack of specialist teachers, timetable clashes, or limited resourcing for small classes. These factors can be just as important in other areas of the schooling sector such as primary where, for example, schools are challenged to meet the needs of a new language curriculum area for Year 7 and 8s, in Wharekura, or where more support is sometimes needed in the Year 9 and 10 curricula. There may be a range of other student learning needs that can be supported through an LCO that are not so obvious (as previously mentioned) and will be unique to different schools. These could be Gifted and Talented Programmes, ESOL, literacy and numeracy support, cultural connections, opportunities to collaborate across the curriculum, shared opportunities for 'virtual field trips' or 'digital conversations'. A scan of the internal and external learning environment of a school and cluster would identify where there are gaps and where there are opportunities. What are the things we could be doing that are not so immediately obvious? As some schools have gaps in how they can best meet the needs of their students, so too do they have strengths - this provides the basis for successful collaborations between schools. It is also important to remember that all members of a school community are learners. What learning opportunities can be made available for teachers, Principals, BOTs, school staff and the community through an LCO?



Action:

- Carry out a 'learning needs audit' of students to identify the range of learning opportunities, learning areas and levels required.
- Consult with the wider school community, teachers and students as to what learning opportunities they would like to have access to.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

LOGISTICAL COORDINATION



Focus:

Complete an investigation of other LCO and cluster models.



Explanation:

It should be recognised that many LCOs are part of a national network that actively collaborate *across LCOs* as well as *within* their own LCO. As such, consulting with other LCOs is important to assist with your own planning. But, you should also be aware of your potential role in the wider national network.

Identify both the advantages and potential pitfalls of different LCO models and from this analysis develop a model that best meets the specific needs of your group. A collaborative approach actively involving input from all schools and key stakeholders is critical for success. Planning needs to include key strengths such as resources and personnel, and risk management issues such as 'succession' to protect the cluster against the loss of key personnel.

It is important to consider aspects such as commonality of interest and goals, unique characteristics and problems of the schools, and size of the LCO.

Ideally any LCO will have a clear understanding of the advantages and potential pitfalls of its own model. This can be very helpful for future planning and risk management.



Action:

- Consult with key members of other LCOs.
- Key personnel visits to a number of active, experienced LCO schools.
- Consult with relevant national bodies and institutions already working with clusters such as: MOE, VLN Community, ICTPD team.
- Explore the possibility of buddying with an experienced LCO as a 'satellite' as your own LCO grows and develops its expertise.
- Investigate strategic and financial planning in existing LCO.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT



Focus:

Identify strengths and professional development needs of schools.



Explanation:

It is important for the whole school community to participate in discussion about an LCO and the opportunities it may bring to their students and their school. This will help to enable a shared understanding, and support of the LCO development. It will also serve to raise expressions of interest from staff that are keen to participate as well as indications from some who may be reticent. The implications of joining an LCO, both positive and potential negative factors, need to be fully discussed. A stocktake of skills and expertise in the school, including positive attitudes about elearning should be taken to assist in targeting the skilled staff who can actively contribute to the LCO, taking into account the student needs already identified. This will also assist in tailoring professional development opportunities that best meet the needs of participating staff.



Action:

Share with the schools, community, governance boards and teaching staff, a bigger picture overview of the elearning landscape and the role of LCOs. Include historical information, examples of current practice and stimulate discussion of the possibilities involvement in an LCO will bring. Invite contacts from other LCOs, the Virtual Learning Network Community or Ministry of Education to assist with the preparation, and/or, presentation and facilitation of discussions if necessary. Be wary of relying too heavily on the 'outside experts' - messages are much more powerful when shared by respected existing members of a school community.

When carrying out an audit of skills and expertise some things to consider are:

- While technical skills may be useful, good teaching skills and a willingness to learn are the critical factors.
- A survey of the teaching 'scope' and interests within schools often reveal hidden treasures or assets.
- Invite initial indications from all staff who may be interested in participating, and explore opportunities for exposing them to examples of existing models.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

PEDAGOGY



Focus:

Identify current and desired teaching practices online.



Explanation:

An identification of current and desired teaching practices online, and an understanding of the use of learning environments, will enable teachers at a personal level and schools at system level to determine changes to existing practices that will need to be made. It is important to note that traditional teaching practice that may be used in face to face classroom environments is not directly transferable into online learning and that a change in pedagogy does not involve an add-on fix but an integral change to the way teaching and learning occurs in online and blended learning environments.

Online learning environments, using tools such as a Learning Management System (LMS) and Web 2.0 tools, are integral for support of online learning and collaboration between teachers and schools. They also provide the capacity to bridge the divide between online (distance) learning and face to face classrooms by enabling a convergence of both into blended learning environments.



Action:

- Provide support and guidance for teachers and schools as they explore pedagogical changes and the system changes that will enable this. This can be in the form of professional learning opportunities, access to experts, sharing and discussion within and between schools and other LCOs, guidance for strategic planning, and decision-making to support system level changes. Provide opportunities for teachers to observe online learning in action.
- Provide opportunities to explore other clusters' use of online learning environments. Share research about changes to teaching practices.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

TECHNICAL COORDINATION



Focus:

Conduct a technical audit, and identify technical needs.



Explanation:

For an effective LCO to succeed, schools require a robust and well-maintained internal network, sufficient bandwidth, access to equipment, and technical support. This audit will be essential in the following stage to inform decision-making about possible changes to technical resourcing and additional technical infrastructure required, especially those involving business or outside technical assistance. Consider also the importance of a cross-school audit and subsequent planning that would leverage an economy of scale for provision of equipment, services and support. This is of particular significance with the development of high speed networks, regional loops, and a potential National Education Network (NEN) and the ability to aggregate and share technical services and support through cloud computing and hosted applications.



Action:

Carry out an audit to identify the available and required technical resources and expertise required for elearning in each school.

An audit should:

- Provide an overview of existing hardware, software, network capability, and peripherals, as well as ongoing costs associated with internet and phone connections.
- Identify additional technical requirements. **This process must be informed by the needs of the teaching and learning process** and ensure the resulting infrastructure will be reliable, user-friendly, readily accessible, and easily administered.
- Consider a range of purchase or lease options before committing to a particular technical solution. In addition, the level of sustainability, scalability, and ease of maintenance should be addressed.

Establish a small team of ICT leaders from across the LCO who can collaborate to identify shared technical needs and contribute to planning and decision-making.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

LEARNING AND TEACHING RESOURCES



Focus:

Conduct a review of appropriate learning resources, identify gaps and future needs.



Explanation:

The provision of appropriate learning resources is important for the success of online learning. Online resources need to be easily accessible to students and teachers, available in standard digital formats, and flexible enough to be repurposed according to specific learning outcomes. Other types of resources that need to be considered in individual schools are the access to specialist text books, laboratories and equipment, audio-visual and communication equipment, computer and internet access and learning support personnel. This is particularly important for online students as most often they work more independently than their classroom counterparts and need greater levels of learning support to enable them to access the required resources. Consideration should be given to how schools can best collaborate in LCOs to create, share and access a wide range of learning resources. Note that, potentially, learning resources that are appropriate for online learning will also be suitable for use by every student and teacher in blended learning situation.



Action: Carry out a LCO-wide review of learning resources suitable for sharing across schools to support online learning.

This can be facilitated by the following actions:

- Explore the LCO online space for the sharing of information, expertise, and resources.
- Develop curriculum and/or year level teams from across the LCO and identify special teaching support and elearning expertise.
- Assess school strengths that can maximise the benefits of the whole LCO. e.g. media, organisational, practical, legal, or community expertise.
- Remember to include MOE provided resources from Digistore and TKI.
- Identify the specific learning resources needs for online courses where there may be shortfalls and excesses.

- Share resources/ expertise between schools instead of making individual purchases.
- Identify existing internet-based resources to enrich and enhance learning programmes.
- Explore opportunities for teachers to collaborate, create and share learning resources as Open Education Resources.
- Explore opportunities for students to contribute to the creation of learning resources through their own learning process. e.g. co-constructed wiki 'text books'.
- Identify teaching and learning resources/expertise available to enhance a programme/course e.g. National Library, Te Papa, virtual field trips, Book Council, community resources (local art galleries, museums, and people).

Supporting Resources:

<http://www.digistore.org>

<http://www.tki.org.nz>

ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT STRATEGIES



Focus:

Identify support, management and leadership personnel.



Explanation:

Aspects of the process of the development of an LCO can be very time consuming and require co-ordination and management/leadership across the schools. It is important to identify a suitable person who will be responsible for the administration and management/leadership tasks that are required when setting up an LCO. A central point for communication and co-ordination across the LCO will streamline the processes that are occurring across all areas of the development. Ideally this person would already be an active participant in the emerging LCO but these tasks can be delegated to existing ancillary staff or by employing an additional person.



Action:

- Identify a key person who can fill this administrative role.
- Ensure this role doesn't fall on people within a school by default. Staff should be actively engaged, fully understand the requirements and be supported into these positions.
- Ensure adequate time allocation is given to administrative support.
- Key tasks at this stage would be to act as the central point of contact for correspondence with the LCO, coordinate meetings, and circulate information and key documents.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

FINANCE/FUNDING



Focus:

Explore existing funding models and draft budgetary requirements.



Explanation:

Draft costs and the initial budget should be compiled from accurate, up-to-date data by an experienced person. It should be informed by initial stocktakes/audits undertaken and aligned to developing goals of the LCO. It is important that input from all key participants is included and that it is based on at least a 3 to 5 year plan of expenditure.

Ensure draft budgets scope costs associated with the following:

- technology (including connectivity)
- staffing including professional development and support
- resources
- facilities
- professional fees.

Explore the options for financial management: Should finances be run through one of the participating schools? Should a separate bank account be opened? Should a charitable trust be formed?

The investigation of a range of LCO funding models would provide examples of sound financial practice or pitfalls to avoid.

Key people/bodies that need to be involved are: Principals, School BOTs, Ministry of Education, community trusts, local tertiary/vocational providers, commercial sponsors, telecommunications companies, local bodies, and businesses.

The on-going financial management of the LCO should be the responsibility of a professional with an understanding of both financial and educational backgrounds. Financial processes should be open and transparent to all key stakeholders.

Investigate a wide range of funding sources and make a collective decision about the financial options e.g. Ministry of Education initiatives such as ICTPD funding, community, and commercial options.

It should be recognised that many funding sources are contestable and in the long term not sustainable. Regardless of external funding opportunities which may be useful (particularly in the early development of an LCO), all schools will need to be prepared to contribute funding in the form of staffing and finances to ensure the long term sustainability of an LCO. The return on investment (RoI) would be realised by the economies of scale gained by the full participation of all schools and the benefits gained by their students.

**Action:**

- Identify person/people with necessary skills and experience to be responsible for finances.
- Investigate other LCO funding models.
- Collate information from school/LCO stocktakes and investigations.
- Draft initial budget.
- Investigate a range of funding sources.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

EVALUATION AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

**Focus:**

Identify appropriate evaluation processes.

**Explanation:**

Processes for evaluation should be developed from the outset as this feeds into further strategic planning. This is an ongoing cyclic process of seeking and receiving feedback from stakeholders, and evaluating feedback against LCO vision, purposes and developing strategic goals.

**Action:**

- Identify key groups from whom feedback will be a key component of the evaluative process.
- Identify person/s tasked with completing the evaluation process.
- Gather feedback through formal and informal mechanisms e.g. anecdotal evidence, surveys, conversations with key people and meeting discussion notes.
- Evaluate feedback and use to inform further planning and practice.
- Share feedback with leadership group.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

OUTCOMES: Commitment to participate

Commitment from participating members of the group to participate in the planning and further development of the LCO. This may be formalised through a memorandum of agreement (MoA) between Boards of Trustees.



PHASE THREE

PLANNING

PHASE 3: Planning



Work at the planning stage will involve detailed preparation in a number of areas. It will be important that excellent communication channels are well established and regularly used in this process to ensure all stakeholders are kept informed of progress, and involved in the planning process itself.

It will also be important to identify and involve a range of people who have knowledge and abilities in specialist areas – e.g. budgeting, technology, professional learning, programme planning, timetables etc. As much as possible, provision should be made for consultation and involvement of people from each of the participating institutions through the planning process.

Throughout this phase it will be important to regularly reference the established vision and values of the LCO to avoid succumbing to the temptation of focusing too narrowly on short-term issues, and lose sight of the longer term ideal.

Parents/whanau and students should continue to be consulted in this phase.

All planning should be documented and available to the community electronically.

Focus:

- Regular, effective communications.
- Addressing learner needs.
- Timetabling, scheduling and other logistics.
- Staff appointments, job descriptions.
- Initial professional development.
- Technical requirements.
- Learning and teaching resources.
- Budget formation.

Outcome:

A 12-month action plan for the LCO, linked to the strategic plans of participating schools is agreed to and ratified. Staffing and other resourcing allocated. Technical, management and student support systems in place for LCO to begin operating.

NOTES

RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATIONS



Focus:

Ensure regular, effective communication with stakeholders



Explanation:

Communication structures previously established are further developed, maintained, and effectively used by all members of the LCO. There should be a clear understanding of how and when to use the various communication methods adopted, and expectations that communications should be regular, relevant, and effective amongst the group. It is important to connect with other LCOs and similar developing groups, especially those already well established in the VLN community, as they have been through similar processes and are well positioned to give support and guidance.

The leadership group, identified in the scoping stage, should nominate a spokesperson to ensure consistent information is available to all and to manage external communications with other groups (such as the Ministry of Education, the VLN, other LCO and community groups). Professional development for the leadership group which enables them to discuss, utilize and model online communication skills is important, to not only enable streamlined communications within the group, but to lead by example to other members of the LCO. It is important to phase in the development and use of new communication tools over a period of time to ensure that LCO members have time to learn to use them effectively and do not get overwhelmed with too many new technologies at once. The development of a timeline for the introduction and integration of communication structures will support this, beginning with familiar technologies such as listserv email communication and websites, and moving towards a range of other online communication and collaborative tools e.g. Adobe Connect, Elgg, Google Docs, as best suits the purposes of the group. As it is likely that a range of tools will be used as the LCO develops it is important to establish **one main point of online contact** such as an LCO website portal that will have links and support for this.



Action:

- Nominate an LCO communications spokesperson.
- Plan for professional development in the use of online tools.
- Establish a timeline for the introduction of online communication tools.
- Liaise with other LCO and elearning advisors/consultants for support.
- Establish an online portal website.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

LEARNER NEEDS



Focus:

Ensure learner needs are identified and addressed in an ongoing manner.



Explanation:

The needs of the learners within the LCO (as identified in the scoping process) need to be continually reassessed each year, bearing in mind the “learner” may be the students, staff, executive, principal, or community. The identification of needs is aligned also with the perceived opportunities collaboration within an LCO can bring to a school. Therefore it is important to engage schools in continuing to raise their awareness. This can be done by promoting the activities of the LCO and wider VLN community through school information/open days, school newsletters, blogs, and news stories in local media. Secondary schools can also use options meetings and curricula choice booklets to promote online learning opportunities. Once needs are identified, processes and protocols need to be determined to make learning opportunities available. This will involve discussions between schools in how they can make new opportunities available that meet (for example, new classes) the needs of their students within the LCO, and negotiations with other LCO through the VLN community to broker access to existing learning opportunities.

Protocols that need to be considered in respect of learner access will need to cover things such as support for students who will be online learners, the numbers of students that can be catered for in an online programme, and the logistics of shared timetables.

In considering learner access to online programmes you need to be aware of students’:

- motivation eg. why do they want to take this class?
- their academic ability, literacy levels, learning style, or prior knowledge
- independence, maturity, and concentration level
- self management skills.

These considerations are very important when choosing an online programme that suits the needs of the learner and in the development of learner support structures within a school. Research and experience have shown that academic prowess is not as important a factor in successful online learning as is the commitment of schools and students to be engaged in their learning.

Indications of a need to participate in online learning (such as enrolment in classes) need to be established ahead of time, well before programmes commence. For example in secondary schools this happens at the end of the previous year, or at the latest, very early in the new year. This will enable the provision of a suitable time to run the programme, and the intake of the appropriate number of students.

The VLN offers facilities for brokerage, enrolment, and timetabling of learning programmes through their website. Here full information about classes available can be listed by LCOs who are offering them, enrolments can be made, and times scheduled. There are some standard protocols around student participation that has been adapted across LCOs in the VLN community as there are many students enrolling outside of their own learning communities. One overarching protocol that underpins the way schools and LCOs operate within the VLN is the premise of ‘reciprocity’. If schools and LCOs want opportunities for their learners to participate, they also need to contribute learning opportunities to the VLN.

However, most LCOs in the VLN will need to meet the needs of their own cluster first.



Action:

- Following ‘learning needs audit’ carried out in scoping phase, discuss with leadership team how they can be met within the LCOs.
- Investigate learning opportunities available from other LCOs through the Virtual Learning Network.
- Decide how the needs of learners within the LCOs will best be met internally from participating schools, and externally through other LCOs.
- Investigate existing VLN protocols for student participation.
- Develop protocols for participation within the LCOs (these may be very similar to others particularly if you plan to engage with other LCOs).
- Develop structures for learning support (student training, allocate study space, time, and support personnel).
- Promote online learning opportunities through a range of forums. e.g. school newsletters, open days.
- Advertise available online learning programmes within LCOs and on VLN website.
- Depending on the number of online learners within your LCOs, you will need to draft a timetable if classes are synchronous. As numbers grow, this becomes more critical.
- Accept enrolment requests from participating schools and prepare to enrol learners on the VLN website.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

LOGISTICAL COORDINATION



Focus:

Establish staff appointment procedures. Identify and appoint staff to key positions.



Explanation:

The identification of people to different LCO staffing roles is needed for the successful implementation of elearning programmes. Key staff roles within an LCO that directly support online learning will be eTeachers, school co-ordinators, mentor teachers, and learning and technical support. The appointment of a co-ordinator across the LCO is important for the overall coordination of online learning and also for the support of the LCO administration and governance. Some LCO split this role into an eDean who has oversight of online learning only, and an ePrincipal who leads all other activities of the LCO. The various roles should be seen as interdependent and forming part of a team, within a school and across the LCO. Some schools may combine these roles in various ways depending on the availability and experience of their staff.

Staff appointment procedures should ensure that staff are actively involved in the process and that roles and responsibilities don't fall on people within schools by a process of default. For example, eteachers should be appointed according to the identified need for particular learning opportunities that they are qualified to provide and not solely because they have expertise in elearning technologies. Or, the position of elearning coordinator doesn't fall by default on the person in the school who previously was in charge of liaison with the Correspondence School. Staff who are engaged in these roles need to be given enough time, resources, support and recognition for their work. LCO protocols for staffing need to be developed collectively and with reference to national practice and in the case of Secondary teachers, PPTA recommendations. This covers aspects such as online time (synchronous and asynchronous), class sizes, professional development needs.



Action:

- Investigate current practice for staffing provisions for online learning relevant to the type of classes that will be offered in the LCO.
- Decide on a staffing protocol that is fair and acceptable to all schools and potential eteachers
- Identify different roles in the LCO that need to be covered.
- Develop job descriptions for various roles.
- Establish conditions of employment for staff who will take on these roles (eg time allowance).
- Set procedure for appointment of staff to key positions.
- Establish an induction programme for new staff.
- Schedule regular LCO 'staff meetings'.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT



Focus:

Establish initial professional development (induction) programme.



Explanation:

A professional development programme should be established that takes into account the individual needs of all participants, is focused on improving learning outcomes for all students and contributes to the growth, and development of the Learning Community Online. Many LCO have an induction day at the beginning of each year for all participants in the LCO (students and staff), as well as training and preparation days at the end of the year for eteachers. In addition, eteachers will need ongoing focused professional learning opportunities and regular opportunities to meet to share information and support each other.

Professional learning at this stage will be on the building of skills, knowledge, and understanding of online learning design and pedagogy that will be practiced in the context of an online or blended environment. These can be in the form of one-on-one learning with the LCO co-ordinator or a mentor/buddy, or formal workshops for identified needs for several staff across the cluster. It should be noted that a professional development programme that is targeted at LCO key personnel can also be useful and relevant to the wider teaching community in schools. Therefore, consider involving other staff when these opportunities arise. This enables the wider school community to not only 'upskill' but to be more directly involved in LCO activities and so avoid the pockets of isolation that can sometimes occur in a school when working only with 'subsets' of staff.



Action:

- Plan a professional development programme that caters for the needs of everyone in the LCO - students, teachers, principals.
- Tap into the expertise of other schools, LCOs, the VLN community, and the ICTPD network to support professional learning activities.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

PEDAGOGY



Focus:

Develop a professional learning programme focussed on student-centred learning.



Explanation:

Teachers will have identified pedagogical practice that is focussed on student-centred learning - they now need to begin applying this to their own practice. Teachers will need support and guidance to make changes which may at first be outside of their comfort zone. It is important to provide a safe forum for sharing practice and discussion between teachers and to continue to provide models of effective teaching and learning strategies. Encouragement should be given to enable teachers to feel confident about sharing control of the learning experience with their students and to become learners alongside their students.

A professional learning programme should include a range of opportunities for teachers to observe themselves, to observe others, and to reflect and evaluate their teaching with support from others. A useful strategy for teachers to gain a perspective of what it is like to be an online learner is for them to be involved in online learning themselves. Investigate online teaching programmes available, graduate or post-graduate level. Encourage teachers to join relevant online professional learning events when they are offered through the VLN community (e.g. National Library, Studylt tutorials) or the ICT PD network (e.g. Time4Online...). Develop a buddy system where new teachers are supported by experienced teachers within or across LCO. Facilitate or join in with curricula meetings within and across LCOs. As indicated there are many strategies for providing professional learning opportunities for teachers but to be truly effective they need to enable change in teacher practice and improvement in student learning.



Action:

Develop a professional learning programme that includes:

- Individual goals from teachers about what will change about their practice.
- Enrol teachers in an online class.
- Provide opportunities for observation of others and self-observation (classes can be recorded for VC on the Tandberg Server, or in Adobe Connect).
- Join and/or facilitate online professional learning events.
- Join and/or facilitate teacher curricula meetings.
- Create a mentoring/buddy system for teachers.
- Provide time for discussion and reflection.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

TECHNICAL COORDINATION



Focus:

Obtain advice and explore technical support options.



Explanation:

A team of ICT leaders from across the LCO collaborate on planning and decision-making based on the technical needs identified in the scoping stage. Planning should cover such things as efficiencies which can be gained by the sharing of skilled personnel across schools, in the bulk purchase of equipment, and the identification of preferred providers for LCO schools.



Action:

- Explore initiatives such as support for infrastructure upgrades, access to high speed fibre, regional loops and the NEN. Liaise with community groups, schools, and the MOE regarding provision for your LCO.
- Identify an Internet Service Provider (ISP) that is responsive to the open and flexible use of a variety of elearning technologies along with generous bandwidth to enable their effective use.
- Identify MOE support for technology such as audio/video conference bridge, Tandberg Server, Adobe Connect, LAMs and the availability of supported cluster sites such as Moodle, Elgg or other LMS or Google Apps.
- Develop an LCO plan for technical development and support.
- Explore opportunities for partnership with technical providers.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

LEARNING AND TEACHING RESOURCES



Focus:

Make decisions about how to access and develop appropriate teaching and learning resources.



Explanation:

The review undertaken in the scoping stage will inform next steps in the access and development of appropriate learning resources. It should be noted that the development of resources for online learning is a large and ongoing task and involves some work and time to develop. This process can be supported by providing professional learning, and time for teachers that enables them to effectively find appropriate resources online, and adapt and create their own resources. The collaboration of teams of teachers, sharing and adapting existing resources, significantly assists with workload reducing the need to 'reinvent the wheel'. The use of shared Learning Management Systems or other online spaces is not only vital for the support of online learners, but can be a tool to co-construct learning resources and provide a repository of shared resources easily accessed by all within an LCO. Consider how students can be supported in developing their own Personal Learning Environments using a variety of Web 2.0 tools, or mobile technologies alongside schools' LMS and ePortfolio tools.



Action:

- Explore a range of open source tools for creating digital content e.g. exe.editor, or LAMs.
- Plan for opportunities for teachers to collaborate, create and share learning resources within schools, within and between LCOs across learning areas.
- Engage with advisory services and other agencies to assist with the access and development of resources e.g. Ako Panuku, languages advisors, subject associations.
- Decide on a learning management system and begin staff development in its use.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT STRATEGIES



Focus:

Establish LCO level management team and systems.



Explanation:

In addition to the staff who are directly concerned with the day-to-day operations of online teaching and learning, there need to be structures in place for governance and management of the LCO. This management team will drive the strategic direction of the LCO and develop and confirm policy and protocol for LCO operations. For many LCO, the governance structure consists of all member schools' principals. For larger LCO, the governance group may consist of a smaller group of principals and school leaders who act as an 'Executive Group' and have a mandate to make decisions on behalf of the LCO. In addition to this, many LCO appoint an ePrincipal/LCO leader as part of this management team. There are other models of governance that could be considered by an LCO that includes bringing in expertise from the wider school community (for example, BOT members, student representation, and community trusts).

The administrative systems this team should be setting up at this stage would be:

- collective policy on student achievement e.g. reporting, processing of NZQA data
- protocols and guidelines for student support
- procedures for managing teaching problems e.g. staff movement, struggling teachers, professional integrity, and compliance issues
- procedures for managing student participation - enrolments, withdrawals, attendance
- administrative pathways between students, teachers and coordinators in schools e.g. publishing of online learning timetables, distribution of contact information.



Action:

- Confirm governance structures of the LCO.
- Set up administrative systems.
- Develop policies and protocols.
- Ensure links with administrative systems, policies and protocols already in existence for face-to-face context.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

FINANCE/FUNDING



Focus:

Coordinate financial systems within and between schools.
Finalise budget.



Explanation:

The cost to individual schools will vary depending on the model adopted by the cluster or provider e.g.reciprocal staffing model, financial contribution model, financial weighting aligned to student rolls, tertiary programme course costs, STAR funding eligibility or other forms of sharing staffing and resources that may be determined. It is very easy to consider the extra costs involved as a disincentive for establishing the LCO. Throughout the process there needs to be a clear reference back to the agreed goals and principles, and an evaluation of the cost of doing this against the cost of not doing it / benefits achievable. (This may mean there will need to be a rationalisation of existing expenditure. For instance, money that has previously been spent to employ a number of part-time staff to provide supervision for senior subjects may now better be spent on meeting the costs of accessing expertise from the LCO).



Action:

At this stage you need to:

- Establish financial systems and accountability within the LCO.
- Discuss and establish individual school contributions - staffing and financial.
- Get a firm commitment from sponsors and funding sources.
- Define contractual obligations with technical services and resource providers.
- Confirm final budgets and plans.
- Develop a cluster-wide policy determining individual school budgets to meet possible online class costs, such as photocopying, travel, teacher release, resource acquisition, faxing, phone, post/courier, internet access.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

EVALUATION AND STRATEGIC PLANNING



Focus:

Identify specific outcomes/indicators against which to measure success toward the goals of the LCO.



Explanation:

A strategic plan provides the overarching mechanism for setting LCO goals, milestones and evaluation processes. It should be based on the shared vision and guiding principles of the LCO and be incorporated into, and aligned with, LCO schools own planning.



Action:

- Prepare LCO strategic plan and share with LCO and wider community.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

OUTCOMES: Action plan ratified and resourcing allocated

A 12-month action plan for the LCO, linked to the strategic plans of participating schools that is agreed on and ratified. Staffing and other resourcing allocated. Technical, management and student support systems in place for LCO to begin operating.



PHASE FOUR IMPLEMENTATION

PHASE 4: Implementation



If the planning phase has been completed successfully the implementation phase should proceed with relative ease. It is important, however, not to depend only on the planning for the successful implementation. While the detailed planning provides an essential framework for all members of the LCO to work to, it is important to ensure that there are robust processes in place for monitoring progress, and for making decisions about emergent issues and concerns before they become problematic.

Feedback from parents/whanau and students should be regularly sought, and participating staff should also regularly review what they are doing to ensure successful outcomes.

Excellent communications between and among the participating schools, staff and students will be critical to the success of the implementation phase.

Focus:

- Excellent communications.
- Student and staff support.
- Shared calendars, timetables and protocols.
- Ongoing staff PD.
- Shared resource libraries.
- Budget.
- Review of action plan objectives.

Outcome:

LCO operating successfully, and a positive experience for both students and staff. Support systems and procedures operating effectively, with issues and concerns identified and addressed early.

There is a commitment to maintain the Learning Community for an agreed period of time. The participating schools make a full commitment to support the agreed upon structures.

NOTES

RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATIONS



Focus:

Use and, where necessary, modify or augment existing communication channels.



Explanation:

In order for the cluster to proceed successfully it must be underpinned by a common understanding and robust communication processes to ensure all members are actively involved in, at their level of the collaborative network. The communication processes established in the planning stage should be working well and it is useful to check and modify these channels. This will include a cluster website or portal for the collection and dissemination of information relating to cluster activities; this will form the first point of contact for all interested parties.



Action:

- Ensure communication channels are well established.
- Leadership team continue to meet regularly.
- Feedback to and from schools and the community are maintained.
- Communication is ongoing with other leaders from other LCOs and national organisations.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

LEARNER NEEDS



Focus:

Provide ongoing support for learners in this environment.



Explanation:

In order to meet the learner needs, the LCO will have set up structures to ensure support through all levels of participation. The crucial element to success in online learning is the support structures in the school. Schools should recognise that:

- students' online lessons require a higher priority than other school activities
- students need to be encouraged to be active participants
- student training needs to be provided at the earliest opportunity (technical, study, and self-management skills).

Where the learner accesses information and assistance will need to be a clear process from identification and enrolment through to completion of units or courses of learning. In secondary schools this might be by way of a distance learning coordinator, pathways or futures department in the school, an eDean, mentor teacher or support person - all ensuring that all learner needs are met. In school coordination should involve communication with all staff to ensure the learning process is visible across the school and contributing communities. At a cluster level the support process will be through regular updates and ongoing communication across the organisations involved with the learners. Regular reporting of progress will be a requirement for sustaining success for the learner and to ensure issues are addressed in a timely manner. There should be provisions made for student feedback.

The LCO will make full use of the resources and opportunities available through the wider network of communities online – these will be accessible through their joining the Virtual Learning Network communities (VLNC).



Action:

Ensure robust support processes are in place by providing:

- Induction and training for students who are learning online for the first time.
- Mechanisms for student feedback (eg survey, student meetings)
- Opportunities for students to support each other through online forums and within schools
- Information to students about how to access support
- Guidelines to schools about student support such as the setting up of learning centres for supported study and the provision of mentor teachers
- A clear process for reporting between schools and LCOs

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

LOGISTICAL COORDINATION



Focus:

Confirm shared timetables, calendars, and protocols for sharing with staff and students.



Explanation:

An open framework should be developed that contains the information required to ensure the proper procedures are carried out and adhered to in the undertakings of the cluster. All members of the cluster and wider community are aware of their roles and are able to access this information and ensure their part is complete. The development of shared protocols between schools in an LCO, and between LCOs in the wider network, is important to ensure that there are clear understandings from all involved about how to work effectively together. Many LCOs have, in consultation with other similar groups, developed an elearning handbook that sets out clearly what are agreed ways of operating. Some also, in addition to this, develop a Memorandum of Agreement (as separate from the MOA described at the end of the Scoping stage) that outlines the key protocols for participation, which Boards of Trustees and Principals sign to ensure that these shared protocols are understood and agreed to by all. Some key areas that are addressed in shared protocols are the development of shared timetables, shared staffing, resourcing, and student support. These key areas are addressed at various levels throughout the LCO handbook. The focus in this section will be the logistical protocols of planning for online learning which covers shared timetable and staffing.

A shared timetable is necessary to enable students and teachers from different schools to meet at the same time (synchronous learning). This can be problematic in secondary schools where timetables can be quite rigid, and vary greatly between schools. It has become common protocol in these schools that synchronous learning takes place at an agreed time on the hour at least once a week (the time is usually determined by the eteacher's availability). Other time for learning takes place asynchronously through online learning environments and other communications between students and teachers. One person from the LCO should be in charge of creating the shared timetable - this is usually done by the person who is enrolling students. The timetabling gets more challenging with increasing numbers of classes being accessed and increasing numbers of schools involved in those classes. It is essential that the VLN site is constantly updated with correct information about online classes as the national timetable on the VLN site is an invaluable tool for preparing LCO shared timetables. Consideration should be given when encountering timetable clashes to vary the type of technology that is being used for synchronous learning. For example, instead of video conferencing (VC), Adobe Connect, audio conferencing or desktop VC can be used. Timetabling protocol within primary schools is less complex as they are often able to work more flexibly together. Assistance is available from the VLN community in learning how to use the VLN website effectively for enrolments and shared timetables.



Action:

- Access elearning handbooks from other LCO.
- Develop an elearning handbook (policies and protocols) that will be adopted within your LCO.
- Develop a MOA for the provision of shared classes, staffing, students and resources between LCO member schools.
- Decide on a staffing protocol that is fair and acceptable to all schools and potential eteachers (These points should be taken back to the previous stage).
- Train person in charge of enrolments and timetabling in the use of the VLN website.
- The following logistical systems need to be in place and adhered to so as to enable the following to occur in time for implementing in the coming school year:
 - external and internal provision of learning is finalised within a timeframe that allows for participation across the clusters
 - programme information is posted on cluster and national websites; (e.g. deadlines late November for www.virtualearning.school.nz)
 - the students and wider community are advised
 - staffing for delivery and support is negotiated prior to commencement of the school year
 - the timetable along with key calendar and resources confirmed
 - professional development, vc training, school and technical support for teachers and students available prior to new year commencing
 - enrolments are collected and evaluated by teaching staff and cluster co-ordinators
 - enrolment data is entered through as per provider requirements
 - a system is established for the collection, collation, and distribution of formal and informal feedback from students, teachers and coordinators/mentors
 - a system for acknowledgement and response to successes and challenges in an effective and timely manner is agreed by cluster management/leadership.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT



Focus:

Establish ongoing professional development within a community of practice.



Explanation:

LCO e-teachers will have had initial training and induction to prepare them to teach online. They now need to embed this into their teaching and build in opportunities to reflect on, and refine, their practice. Opportunities to share with a wider community of learners within the LCO and with other LCO will enable collaboration and knowledge sharing. Professional learning at this stage will be on the continued building of skills and knowledge of online pedagogies and tools and the evaluation of the impact of this based on student learning outcomes.



Action:

Provide professional learning opportunities:

- For teachers to collaborate, share knowledge and provide peer support. This can be in the form of meetings, workshops and observations in other online classes.
- For teachers to reflect on their own practice by recording and reviewing online classes using the Tandberg server or Adobe Connect recording.
- That are evaluative based on involve student feedback, attendance and achievement data.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

PEDAGOGY



Focus:

Ensure teaching practices are reflective and changing from traditional to blended learning.



Explanation:

The teaching group have been involved in professional learning to help them to adjust to the different requirements of teaching within the LCO. They will be able to co-construct learning environments with other teachers and with the learners themselves. They will be working in communities of practice with other teachers and their cohort of students will be both face to face and online.

The tools teachers use will be chosen to enable flexible learning opportunities that fit the variety of learning dispositions of students and will allow for changes in LMS systems. The teachers will use a variety of these tools and develop programmes and resources that support synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities.



Action:

- Build on the professional learning of the teacher cohort through established connections with the professional development of other learning communities. Teachers engage in professional groups around their year level or curriculum.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

TECHNICAL COORDINATION



Focus:

Ongoing and effective support processes are in place.



Explanation:

It is important to have effective and ongoing technical support to ensure technology is not a barrier to learning. Technical difficulties for students and teachers can be the access to computers, access to email, access to an online environment, filtering or blocking of internet sites, or computers which are not updated with current software to play multimedia.



Action:

The following should be put in place and available for use by both providers and learners in the online courses:

- Initial and ongoing staff and student training.
- Helpdesk numbers are provided and visible wherever they will be needed.
- User-friendly troubleshooting guides are available wherever they are required (eg. with the laptop pod or Video Conference room, on the LCO website).
- Easy to use system of reporting technical difficulties: urgent and non-urgent.
- Schedule for regular maintenance and support (within schools and across the cluster).
- Means of communicating proactive technical advice (technical support providers are members of support forum and groups).

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

LEARNING AND TEACHING RESOURCES



Focus:

Establish and implement a shared resource library for digital and non-digital resources.



Explanation:

Within the LCO there will be a pool of expertise and resources that, if shared, can enhance the learning for the community members. These have been sourced or the process for their development identified and a coherent policy governs their storage, access, and construction. Within the chosen LMS there is the ability to create meta courses which encourage the co-construction of resources for use in individual courses or programmes of learning. Through this process a diverse range of materials is available to meet different learning styles and teachers will continue to adapt resources and programmes to meet individual needs. They will also be provided with opportunities for sharing these resources across and between community members, and will be supported in their shared development.

Teachers understand policies – school / LCO, for borrowing/ purchasing resources, photocopying, phoning, faxing, etc. Learning providers will have the access rights required to upload resources to virtual environments.

Learners need the opportunity to access a range of online resources, from courses within the LMS and from other online areas within their Personal Learning Environments (PLE). Schools will need to ensure that students have access to computers, and blocking and filtering of internet access is moderated to allow access to a range of resources.

It is important to seek advice about copyright and ownership of learning resources that are created by LCO teachers and the appropriate and fair use of resources created by others which may be found online.

When teachers are creating digital resources they could use Creative Commons licensing to establish copyright for their work. They should be mindful of creating digital resources that can be accessed and repurposed by others, and that where possible they are designed to be SCORM compliant and tagged with appropriate metadata enabling them to be easily found and reused within different online environments.

**Action:**

For the LMSs to become the vehicle for not only storage and access of the shared resources but, the training ground for their shared development;

- All providers within the LCO will have the ability to access and contribute to the resource repository in the LMS.
- Part of the professional learning of the LCO will incorporate the development across subject area and year levels of communities to share and co-construct digital objects and resources.
- Distribution and access to non-digital resources are reflected in a coherent policy that is understood by all LCO members.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT STRATEGIES

**Focus:**

Maintain cluster level management team and systems.

**Explanation:**

With the implementation of the LCO, a person or persons tasked with the responsibility for the administration of the LCO will be in place. They will be a part of, and report to, the LCO governance group, who in turn are answerable to the entire group who have agreed to form the LCO. This role will require functioning on several levels in order to provide the LCO with the support it will require to successfully operate. This will require a link with national activities, a focus on community wide administration, and a thorough working knowledge of the systems operating within the component members of the community. This part of the administration and support must include a working relationship with nominated personnel on site to fulfill the level of support at an individual community member level.

**Action:**

The role of administration and coordination of the LCO is tasked to one or more people. They are responsible to (and assisted in the administration of the LCO by) the governance group.

- Job descriptions for the administrative roles within the LCO are confirmed.
- Site co-ordinators/mentors are allocated time to work and liaise with the LCO learners.
- Site co-ordinators/mentors need to consider (as it applies to their learners):
 - helping set up tracking sheets and back up systems for students' work
 - set up reports, documentation, and absentee systems.
 - storage of NZQA/NCEA data
 - contacts of schools/teachers
 - assisting students with setting up assessment schedules and exam planning
 - liaison (contact) with teacher as go-between for feedback overviews/support.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

FINANCE/FUNDING



Focus:

Agree to and meet regular accounting milestones.



Explanation:

In order for the LCO to function effectively, regular and transparent accounting processes will be implemented as part of the community's working process. All members have committed to the long-term budget for the LCO - this might encompass a differentiation in contribution based on the make up of the individual schools, but ultimately enables the sustainable and equitable development of the community as a whole. Reporting on the financial aspects of the LCO assists in the continuing evaluation of its purpose and will assist in developing a rationale for schools to continue contributing to the LCO to ensure sustainability.



Action:

The following should be done:

- Requirements for accounting milestones are agreed by participating schools.
- Annual financial reports are produced and presented to all schools.
- Reviews and audits are carried out according to standard accounting procedures.
- Management committee is kept apprised of the financial situation throughout the year.
- Monitoring of an individual school online budget is the responsibility of the Principal.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

EVALUATION AND STRATEGIC PLANNING



Focus:

Integrate goals into participating Organisations' strategic plans and validate these through regular milestone reporting.



Explanation:

The key evaluation question at this stage is: "are the goals of the Learning Community Online being met?" This will be answered in two ways. The LCO goals will be reflected by, and embedded within, the strategic planning of the component organisations in the community. This will ensure that there is alignment and accountability between both the organisation and the LCO. Secondly, this in turn will feed into the evaluation and strategic planning of the LCO as a whole.



Action:

Establish an appropriate milestone reporting process.

Consideration should be given to:

- At the provider level a process of regular and effective reflection and evaluation of goals is occurring, e.g. teaching, learning, reflection, and evaluation.
- Regular review of technical architecture and support systems.
- Regular accounting milestones established and adhered to.
- Regular reports to Boards of Trustees and to the Governance Group.
- For all learners an effective process of evaluating online teaching and learning is needed (e.g. is academic success as assured for online students as it is in the classroom?).

Establish systems for collecting data, including capturing of anecdotal feedback and comments. This can be achieved through the community's LMS, feedback from online surveys, and analysis of achievement results from NCEA data.

Create an online report for cluster milestones, incorporating next steps as well as feedback.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

OUTCOMES: LCO Operational

LCO operating successfully, and a positive experience for both students and staff. Support systems and procedures operating effectively, with issues and concerns identified and addressed early.

There is a commitment to maintain the Learning Community for an agreed period of time. The participating schools make a full commitment to support the agreed upon structures.



PHASE FIVE

MATURITY & SUSTAINABILITY

STAGE 5: Maturity and Sustainability



The ultimate goal of establishing and implementing an LCO is that it will continue to operate successfully in a sustainable manner, and demonstrate characteristics of maturity as a system over time.

Sustainability is about ensuring the systems supporting the LCO operation are able to be continued over time without undue extra resourcing or an over-reliance on particular individuals to drive things.

Maturity refers to the characteristics that would identify the LCO as operating effectively in the interests of students, with regular review processes to ensure ongoing development and refinement of the systems and processes supporting it.

It is possible to achieve sustainability without maturity, although one would hope the two would be developed together. The key difference is in the area of ongoing improvement that comes as a result of ongoing review and development at all levels.

Focus:

- maturing relationships
- ongoing review and development processes
- emerging technologies
- long term budgets
- integration with long term strategic planning.

Outcome:

A sustainable operation of the LCO, supported by long term planning and budgets. Continuous improvement evident as a result of ongoing review and development processes at all levels of the system.

Regular milestone reports to principals and Boards of Trustees are used as the mechanism to monitor progress and identify areas for continual improvement. A clear and open process for communication across the cluster will ensure ownership by all the participants in the community.

NOTES

RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Focus:

Develop and enhance relationships both within the cluster and outside the cluster.

Explanation:

The sharing and reciprocity of ideas and knowledge with other clusters/schools is a mark of a mature cluster. This can be achieved through a variety of channels, including:

- Attending Virtual Learning Network (VLN) monthly meetings.
- Sharing documentation via VLN website.
- Participation in the online community (VLNc).
- Working with other schools through the 4 Ps (Projects, Programmes, Professional Learning, Participation).



Action:

- Ensure all staff are involved in some level of participation in the cluster community.
- Broaden relationships to include schools and clusters outside the immediate cluster.
- Ensure there are induction processes in place for new staff.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

LEARNER NEEDS

Focus:

Review current teaching and learning practices to ensure learner needs are met.

Explanation:

Learner needs and the needs of whanau/community should be at the centre of all LCO activity and programme design. By continually reviewing current practices and seeking to improve teaching and learning then the needs of the learner, and needs of the community can be met.



Action:

- Ensure processes for identifying learner /community needs are an integral part of all programme design.
- Ensure programme design is responsive to identified needs, with appropriate support mechanisms in place.
- Establish review process to ensure programme design reflects learner needs analysis and feedback.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

LOGISTICAL COORDINATION



Focus:

Working with others outside the cluster.



Explanation:

The sharing of courses, resourcing, staffing, and projects is a mark of maturity in a cluster. The VLN community works on a philosophy of reciprocity and sharing rather than purchasing courses. The cluster may feel they can invite other schools to join the cluster.



Action:

- Offer courses to other clusters and share with other clusters if capacity allows.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT



Focus:

Maintain programmes of regular professional learning opportunities for teachers.



Explanation:

International research and the early experiences of clusters in New Zealand demonstrates that professional learning for teachers is vital. Teacher professional learning should be sustained and in-depth. This may take various forms such as attending conferences, doing study, shared learning with other teachers, peer teaching and learning, regular meetings, huis etc. This allows teachers to develop the skills and knowledge needed, and allows more experienced teachers to share their experiences.



Action:

Develop a programme of regular professional learning opportunities for teachers.

- Ensure professional learning is budgeted for in schools' 5-year plans.
- Maintain a register of staff professional development activity - identify those with skills to share.
- Create opportunities for staff to share experiences and expertise with others – i.e. assign a 'mentor' to new teachers in the LCO.
- Assign responsibilities for keeping up to date with (and disseminating) current research and best practice.
- Make use of online technologies to access relevant professional learning opportunities and support.
- Subscribe to RSS feeds of relevant websites and make these available to all staff.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

PEDAGOGY



Focus:

Establish a culture that accommodates changing pedagogical practice.



Explanation:

Changes in pedagogical practice will continually develop and evolve as the experience of teachers and students working in an online environment develop, and as the available technologies themselves evolve and develop. There is no single 'right' approach for teaching in an online environment. Teachers should be encouraged to develop a repertoire of pedagogical approaches, and understand which approach to adopt under each set of circumstances. This should allow members to develop and explore teaching and learning practices that address learner needs, and will develop and grow over time especially as new technologies and methods evolve.



Action:

- Implement a review process that identifies and supports existing and emerging pedagogical practice.
- Develop explicit statements about pedagogical practice including reference to models and frameworks to guide practice (eg. SOLO, Blooms, inquiry, problem-based learning etc).
- Actively promote and share successes in using different pedagogical approaches.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

TECHNICAL COORDINATION



Focus:

Developing strategies for review and adoption of new and emerging technologies.



Explanation:

The role of technology in a LCO is to support the education activity within the cluster. No single technology should dominate the way a cluster operates. As a cluster matures, the scope and range of technologies, including synchronous and asynchronous technologies will expand.

Emerging opportunities for schools to move their internal systems off-site and into "the cloud" will become increasingly attractive – both for financial reasons, and for reasons of access. Schools/clusters will require robust systems and strategies for reviewing what technologies to support and invest in. This will include decisions to discontinue using some technologies once their original purpose or usefulness has expired.



Action:

- Establish internal systems for reviewing and exploring the technologies used. This process and planning should take into account:
 - the extent to which the technology supports the desired pedagogical practices of the school/cluster
 - system-wide interoperability – ensuring that
 - ubiquitous access – allowing for staff and students to access these learning environments at any time, from anywhere and by any device
 - shared services models, cloud-based application use and shared data storage services – moving hosting and maintenance issues from inside an individual school to a shared space for the cluster.
- Ensure that there are shared policies regarding online safety and acceptable use of these technologies by staff and students in place for the cluster, and that these are adhered to and supported by all schools in the cluster.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

LEARNING AND TEACHING RESOURCES



Focus:

Regularly review teaching and learning resources to ensure they are current and up to date.



Explanation:

The creation, collection, storage and distribution of resources to support teaching and learning in an online environment is critical to sustaining a model of success in a cluster. Schools and teachers must develop procedures that allow them to continually review and update their practice and adapt their resource base. This must be systematic and organized. An ad-hoc approach leads to teachers working in isolation rather than working collectively and sharing.

Consideration needs to be given to:

- selecting which resources to invest in, and what to create internally
- systems for collecting, storing and sharing teacher-created and student-created resources
- the role of creative commons licensing for shared resources
- understanding the concept of 'learning objects' and their use in online learning.



Action:

- Keep up to date with research on resources for online learning – appoint someone in the cluster to coordinate this.
- Subscribe to rss feeds of relevant websites and resource repositories.
- Provide professional learning opportunities for staff in terms of resource development.
- Adopt a creative commons licensing process for all internally created resources.
- Develop systems for sharing resources both within and outside the LCO.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT STRATEGIES



Focus:

Regularly review systems to ensure LCO management is sustainable.



Explanation:

As personnel change, and as the needs of the LCO change it is important that the administration support processes and leadership practices are sustainable. It is not acceptable to rely on one or two individuals to drive the LCO as this can make the LCO vulnerable when key people leave. It is important as new personnel, especially Principals, come into the cluster then the cluster goals and procedures are shared.



Action:

- Establish a cycle for review of LCO policies and protocols.
- Build leadership capacity across the LCO and provide opportunities for distributed leadership.
- Establish a process for induction of new principals and leadership personnel within schools.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

FINANCE/FUNDING



Focus:

Develop a 3–5 year financial plan to support strategic plan.



Explanation:

The long-term sustainability of the LCO will depend on embedding appropriate budget provisions in each schools' 5-year plan. An objective of the LCO strategic plan should be to provide a funding model that allows for the cluster to be self sustaining and to grow as the needs of the cluster develop and change. This should be regularly reviewed and adapted and be included in school documentation and annual planning.



Action:

- Explore options for financial sustainability, including:
 - sponsorship and partnerships
 - resource sharing with community groups
 - fee-paying students
 - re-assigning internal staffing and resource costs.
- Develop a 3–5 financial plan that takes account of:
 - fixed and flexible costs and depreciation etc.
 - support costs- potential revenue streams
 - flexibility to meet emergent opportunities/costs.
- Evaluate options for lease vs. purchase on technology assets – ensure flexibility when making any financial commitments.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

EVALUATION AND STRATEGIC PLANNING



Focus:

Implement a self-review process aligned with meeting cluster goals and strategic planning



Explanation:

An ongoing cycle of review and strategic planning will ensure that the LCO is responsive to the changing needs of students and of the participating schools. It is important to align this process to the shared vision of the LCO and improving the learning opportunities for all students. This will ensure that if and as changes are made, they reflect the true purpose of the LCO and are not just expedient measures. A long term strategic plan is critical to give enough time to sustain momentum towards LCO goals by providing continuity and some security of appointment to key personnel. The goals of the LCO should align with the long-term strategic plans of each of the member organisations (and vice versa).



Action:

- Establish a review committee and charge them with completing an annual review process to agreed criteria
- Ensure a strategic plan and review process for meeting cluster goals is firmly in place that allows for sustainability e.g. 5 year plan.
- Ensure all schools involved have had input and included the goals of the cluster in their own school charter and documentation.

Supporting Resources: For additional resources relating to this area, including templates for key documents and examples submitted by others, go to <http://www.vln.school.nz/lcomatrix> and click on the appropriate square on the matrix.

OUTCOMES: LCO remains fresh and self renewing

A sustainable operation of the LCO, supported by long term planning and budgets. Continuous improvement evident as a result of ongoing review and development processes at all levels of the system.

Regular milestone reports to Principals and Boards of Trustees are used as the mechanism to monitor progress and identify areas for continual improvement. A clear and open process for communication across the cluster will ensure ownership by all the participants in the community



GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS USED



Adobe Connect	Adobe Acrobat Connect (formerly Macromedia Breeze) is software used to create information and general presentations, online training materials, web conferencing, learning modules, and user desktop sharing.
ADSL	Asynchronous Digital Subscriber Line. A high-speed transmission system using standard telephone lines. Not available in all areas of NZ until Telecom upgrades exchanges (see www.telecom.co.nz/jetstream).
aggregated services	ICT services such as computer applications, broadband access, web services, remote network management are available online and can be shared with a number of other users.
Ako Panuku	To learn and teach to the very best of one's abilities' A Ministry of Education project to support Māori secondary school and wharekura teachers with particular emphasis on te reo Māori teachers.
asynchronous	Communication where interaction takes place, but not at the same time. It is accessed when the user has the time and inclination.
audio-conferencing	The linking of individuals or groups in two or more locations via telephone (possibly using a Polycom).
audio-graphics	Combination of audio-conferencing and computer-based graphics using the internet (e.g. NetMeeting) or other specialised software.
bandwidth	The rate at which data can be transmitted across a connection is determined by bandwidth. The bandwidth of an ISDN line is 64k per second for one channel. Video-conferencing requires a bandwidth of at least 256k to be reasonably reliable and fast.
blended learning	Refers to a mixing of different learning environments - online and face to face. Blended learning gives learners and teachers a potential environment to learn and teach more effectively.
BOTs	Boards of Trustees - school governance bodies.
bridge	A device which allows three or more telecommunications channels, such as phone lines and video conferencing units, to connect.
broadband	Describes the wide range of frequencies that can be transmitted and received through wire or using radio waves. Data, such as text, video or sound, can be transmitted at high speed.
Charitable Trust	Is an irrevocable trust established for charitable purposes, and is a more specific term than "charitable organisation".
cloud computing	Internet-based computing, whereby shared resources, software and information are provided to computers and other devices on-demand.
co-construction	Collaborative approach to learning where learners are actively engaged in building knowledge together.
collabention	Is a mixture of the two nouns collaboration and competition. It describes the situation where organisations competing in the same market collaborate to help promote their joint market share, rather than compete selfishly to promote their own market share.
Correspondence School	Delivers traditional distance learning in New Zealand; mainly paper based but are moving into offering some video conferencing classes to support students. http://www.correspondence.school.nz .
Cluster	A group of schools bound by a set of agreed goal/s and working together for a common purpose.
Cluster coordinator	A position responsible for facilitating the activities of a cluster.
Creative Commons	A set of licences intended to offer the consumer more freedoms than traditional copyright (sometimes abbreviated CC).
desktop VC	A set of interactive telecommunication technologies which allow two or more locations to interact via two-way video and audio transmissions simultaneously through the computer desktop without the need for integrated video conferencing systems. For example, Polycom PVX, CMA deskop, Skype, EVO, Vidyo.
Digistore	Is a storehouse of digital content to support learning across the curriculum, from early childhood through to senior secondary. http://digistore.tki.org.nz
Digital Conversations	A website putting primary and secondary students in touch with local and overseas speakers through videoconferencing. http://www.digitalconversations.org.nz/
Digital Objects	An electronic resource made available online.
discussion board	Or online forum. An online means of holding discussions, usually asynchronously, but may be done in real time. Participants type text into a screen and submit it. The text is then displayed for all participants to respond to in their own time.
distance education	When students and teachers are physically separated from one another during instruction and learning periods.
distance learning	The desired outcome of distance education.

eDean	Coordinator in a school responsible for supporting e-students/e-learners in the home school.
elearning	elearning refers to the smart use of information and communications technology (ICT) to enhance and/or support learning.
Elgg	Elgg is an open source social networking platform. It offers blogging, networking, community, collecting of news using feeds aggregation and file sharing features.
ePortfolio	Or digital portfolio, is a collection of electronic evidence assembled and managed by a user, usually on the Web. Such electronic evidence may include inputted text, electronic files, images, multimedia, blog entries, and hyperlinks. Often used to collect and share evidence of student learning.
E-Principal	The facilitator of a cluster of schools, responsible for the day to day running of a “virtual school” or “cluster of schools” involved in e-learning.
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
e-teacher	A teacher who teaches online synchronously, asynchronously, or both. The teacher may use audio-graphics, video/audio conferencing, web-based courses, etc.
extranet	An intranet that is accessible via the internet, usually through the use of a login ID and password.
Gateway	Programme supporting senior secondary students (Year 11 to Year 13+) undertaking structured workplace learning across a range of industries and businesses around New Zealand, while continuing to study at school. http://www.tec.govt.nz/Funding/Fund-finder/Gateway/
Google Applications (Google Apps)	Is a service from Google for using custom domain names with several Google products. It features several Web applications with similar functionality to traditional office suites, including: Gmail, Google Calendar, Talk, Docs and Sites.
Google Docs	Google Docs is a free, Web-based word processor, spreadsheet, presentation, form, and data storage service offered by Google. It allows users to create and edit documents online while collaborating in real-time with other users.
home school	School where the distance education teacher is based.
ICT roadmap	A plan indicating the path that an organisation will take to ensure the provision of ICT infrastructure and investment to support teaching and learning programmes.
ICTPD	Information, Communication & Technology Professional Development programme offered by the Ministry of Education.
intranet	An internal system of structured resources available to users of a network via a web browser. Usually not accessible to the outside world.
Learner Activity Management System (LAMs)	Is an open source Learning Design system for designing, managing and delivering online collaborative learning activities. It provides teachers with an intuitive visual authoring environment for creating sequences of learning activities.
Learning Management System (LMS)	A learning management system is a software application or Web-based technology used to provide an instructor with a way to create and deliver content, monitor student participation, and assess student performance.
listserv	Also known as a mailing list. An electronic means of sharing email on a shared interest or topic. People subscribe to a list in order to receive regular contact via email.
local cluster	A group of schools with a common interest or need who have decided to work together.
loops	Local ‘urban fibre networks’ that provide fibre based, high speed broadband connectivity to the internet and other online services.
Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)	A draft agreement that may establish the scope of association and mutual responsibilities.
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)	A document that expresses mutual accord on an issue between two or more parties. MOUs are generally recognized as binding, even if no legal claim could be based on the rights and obligations laid down in them.
meta course	Is a course that is "with" or linked to one or more courses for its student enrolment.
modem	Device allowing the translation of digital data to analogue for the transmission across standard phone lines. Come in a variety of speeds. Currently 56k is the highest.
Mobile Technologies	Is a collective term used to describe the various types of cellular communication technology.
Moodle	Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment is a free and open-source e-learning software platform.
m-teacher	Mentor teacher. A teacher who gives specialist curricula support to elearning students, either based in a home school or from a distance.

National Education Network (NEN)	Ministry of Education trial project offering high-speed access to education content and services to schools with open-access fibre.
National Library	The National Library provides services and support to schools, learners and educators. http://www.natlib.govt.nz .
New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA)	NZQA, Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa is the New Zealand government crown entity tasked with providing national and international leadership in assessment and qualifications.
Open Education Resources (OER)	Teaching and learning resources that are freely available online for everyone to use.
Parental Portal	A website that can be accessed or made available to parents, and through which information from the school pertinent to their child's learning can be accessed.
Personal Learning Environment (PLE)	Systems that help learners take control of and manage their own learning. This includes providing support for learners to set their own learning goals, manage their learning; managing both content and process, and communicate with others in the process of learning.
point to multipoint	Link from one site to many sites. point to point Link from one site to another site.
Polycom	A proprietary speaker phone or video phone used for audio or video-conferencing.
portal	Website that acts as portal, or way in to other websites and online space.
Project Probe	(Provincial Broadband Extension) was a joint initiative between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Economic Development., completed in late 2005.
Reciprocal Staffing	The exchange of staffing between schools.
Reciprocity	Commonly refers to a location for storage of online resources, on a static website.
Regional Loops	A term referring to clusters of schools in (mostly) urban areas connected by fibre infrastructure. (see Urban Fibre Network).
RSS Feeds	(most commonly expanded as Really Simple Syndication) is a family of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated works—such as blog entries, news headlines, audio, and video—in a standardized format.
rubric	Is a set of criteria and standards linked to learning objectives that is used to assess a student's performance.
Scholarship Mentoring	Video and audio conferencing after-school tutorials offered nationally to students enrolled in scholarship examinations.
site mentor	Or site supervisor. A person in a distance education site who is responsible for the day to day needs of the distance learner, and the keeping of records, etc. The site mentors are the primary conduit of information and feedback to and from a school to the cluster. The role is required to encourage positive learning experiences rather than focus solely on the administration/disciplinary aspects of operating the LCO. Regular feedback and evaluation of student experience needs to be done, formally and informally, by the people in these roles, and passed on to the teacher through positive constructive guidance.
Social Networking	Defined as the grouping of individuals together into to specific groups, often like a small community or a neighborhood. Social networking online take place within a variety of online applications such as Facebook, Bebo or Myspace.
stakeholders	People or groups of people with a vested interested in the success of a project. Stakeholders in an LCO will be students, parents and whanau, teachers, principals, Boards of Trustees. Stakeholders can also be the wider community, other organisations and educational groups that have input or benefit from the work of the LCO.
StudyIt	Is a website that has been developed as a free online learning resource for all students studying maths and/or sciences to NCEA level. The website went live in April 2004 and is an ongoing Digital Opportunities project. http://www.studyit.org.nz .
Sustainability	Is the capacity to endure a project beyond the initial funding provided
synchronous	Communication where interaction between participants takes place simultaneously. An example would be a live video-conference or sharing a digital whiteboard between sites.
Tandberg Content Server	A system for creation and deployment of live or on-demand video acquired during a video conference.
Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI)	Is a bilingual portal-plus web community which provides educational material for teachers, school managers, and the wider education community. http://www.tki.org.nz

Te Papa	Is New Zealand's national museum, renowned for being bicultural, scholarly, innovative, and fun. http://www.tepapa.govt.nz
Ultra Fast Broadband (UFB)	Ultra-fast broadband is defined as a fibre-to-the-premise broadband service providing downlink speeds of at least 100 Mbps and uplink speeds of at least 50 Mbps.
Urban Fibre Network (UFN)	A local configuration of UFB, connecting businesses, local government, education and health services. Schools connecting via a UFN have sometimes referred to this as a "local loop".
video-conferencing	A combination of video and audio for interactive communication between two or more sites.
Virtual Field Trips	Real-time virtual field trips involve the use of video conferencing and audioconferencing technologies to permit students in one location to virtually visit and learn about people or places in another location. For example, LEARNZ offers a series of free online "virtual" field trips (about 20 per year) for NZ teachers and their classes, which are part of the Ministry of Education's Learning Experiences Outside the Classroom (LEOTC) programme. http://www.learnz.org.nz/
virtual learning	Describes the separation of <i>place</i> and sometimes time of learning from the <i>source</i> of learning.
Virtual Learning Network (VLN)	Set up by the Ministry of Education, this site supports the concept of classrooms without walls, where students and educators have the flexibility to connect with their classes 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
Virtual Learning Network Communities (VLNC)	Set up by the members of the Virtual Learning Network, made up of e-Principals/Facilitators of clusters involved in e-learning in New Zealand.
Virtual Staff Meetings	A meeting held online through a technology such as: video conferencing, audio conferencing, or Adobe Connect.
Web 2.0	The term Web 2.0 is commonly associated with web applications that facilitate interactive information sharing, interoperability, user-centered design, and collaboration on the World Wide Web.
Web Conferencing	Web conferencing is used to conduct live meetings, training, or presentations via the Internet. In a web conference, each participant sits at his or her own computer and is connected to other participants via the internet
Webinars	A generic term for a form of synchronous online conferencing over the internet.
Whanau	Is a Māori-language word for extended family.
Wiki	A wiki is a website that allows the easy creation and editing of any number of interlinked web pages via a web browser using a simplified markup language or a WYSIWYG text editor.

LEARNING COMMUNITIES ONLINE

A support handbook for Cluster Schools



FOLDER SPINE,
PRINT AND TRIM