

INFOLAB (Infolab 21 / Lancaster University)

EU Funding: Capital Project - ERDF Objective 2, Priority 3 (Economic Development Zones), NWDA, Lancaster University, Science Research Investment Fund (SRIF).

Good Practice themes demonstrated:
Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

Whilst small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) have a good track record of innovation and development, they often miss out on business opportunities due to a lack of research expertise.

Infolab21 was established to develop strong relationships between ICT-based companies and Lancaster University, one of the UK's premier research establishments. The aim of Infolab21 is simple - to transfer the knowledge, technology and innovation techniques that are strong within the university into the private sector.

InfoLab21 is Lancaster University's world-class research, development and business centre in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). The centre's activities are split between pure research and business support. The secret to Infolab21's success is marrying up the two to provide a cocktail of services for partner SME organisations. These services come under three main headings; research, training and the application of knowledge and innovation to business.



What singles the project out as being sustainable?

- Infolab21 has created a regional centre of excellence and is fostering a culture of collaboration and support between many disparate fields of ICT.
- Access to world class research. SMEs have limited capacity to engage in pure research but most are excellent at development and bringing products to market. Infolab21 bridges this gap and brings pure research together with the real world development needs of ICT-based SMEs.
- The graduate academy links students up with companies so they work on real world projects. High caliber graduates work with SMEs for a period between two months and two years, to solve problems or develop new technology.
- Infolab21 promotes awareness of ICT and science as a career by working locally with schools. Regular visits by local schoolchildren show them exactly what a career in ICT is like.
- Linking businesses. These include informal networking sessions to link businesses and promote mutually beneficial relationships to technology awareness raising sessions. Infolab21 also offer business unit space to existing businesses and new business start-ups. Here they can have access to the University's expertise, share resources and space or even work 'virtually' from their main office.
- The comprehensive range of support Infolab21 offers gives SMEs access to cutting edge technologies/ research which is backed up by very practical support. The project is currently working with over 70 SMEs and is engaged in many diverse areas of ICT development.

Project Beneficiaries:

Local businesses in the field of ICT or wider technologies that use ICT widely through aided development and specialist support . Lancaster University undergraduates and graduates through practical experience and greater job opportunities. Local Schools through career advice etc.

"Knowledge based business services like those to be provided through Infolab21 are central to our creating a modern economy, high in skills and embracing innovation, science and technology. It is an excellent example of how Universities and business can work in partnership to seize the opportunities presented by the global knowledge economy."

Patricia Hewitt,
Trade and Industry Secretary speaking at the opening of Infolab21.

Further Information:

Steve Riches, InfoLab21, Lancaster University, Lancaster, LA1 4WA
telephone: +44 (0)1524 510440 fax: +44 (0)1524 510491
e-mail: s.riches1@lancaster.ac.uk
website: www.infolab21.lancs.ac.uk



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