KTP BENEFITS

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships are designed to benefit everyone involved:

- Businesses will acquire new knowledge and expertise
- KTP Associates will gain business-based experience and personal and professional development opportunities
- Universities, colleges or research organisations will bring their experience to enhance the business relevance of their research and teaching

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships
Accelerating business innovation; a Technology Strategy Board programme
http://www.ktponline.org.uk

ABOUT THIS CASE STUDY

This Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) project involved a successful collaboration between the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS) and the University of Aberdeen. The aim was to develop research activity at the Wildlife Centre and aid its dissemination using new information routes. In addition, the KTP project was to strengthen research activities, conservation and policy development, and fundraising and campaign activities.

ABOUT THE SPONSORS

The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) delivers independent research, survey, training and knowledge transfer in the environmental sciences to understand and predict the behaviour of the natural environment and its resources.

The Technology Strategy Board is a business-led organisation established by the Government. Its mission is to accelerate research into, and development and exploitation of, technology and innovation for the benefit of UK business - building economic growth and quality of life.

FAST FACTS

- New research and dissemination activities have been developed
- A more streamlined approach to operations has been forged
- Merchandising has been centralised and overheads reduced
- Annual total sales reached over £78,000 in 2008
- Professional development and research experience for the Associate
- Enhanced profile and new research for the university

The WDCS is an international charity with a Head Office in Wiltshire. It is dedicated to the protection of whales, dolphins, porpoises and their environment. The organisation has been running the Wildlife Centre at Spey Bay on the Moray Firth since 2002 and the Kessock Centre in Inverness since 2006. The Wildlife Centre includes a visitor's area, exhibition space, a shop and cafe on the edge of a nature reserve where dolphins, seals, otters, osprey and other local wildlife can be seen and studied.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

To achieve its conservation aims at a local level, the WDCS looked to working in partnership with Aberdeen University. The KTP project aimed to introduce supporters and visitors to the realities of wildlife research, field testing, monitoring and offer practical training and local knowledge.

BENEFITS

The KTP project successfully delivered its key aims and, in many respects, it has surpassed them. An active conservation-focused research programme has been developed and implemented. This includes...
shore-based watches at the Centre, boat-based photo identification and offshore survey work. KTP has helped with the presentation of conservation data to more than 150,000 people who visit the Centre each year. Specialist equipment has been researched, developed and tested for use at the Centre, including a ‘sonobuoy’ to exhibit and record live underwater sound. A programme of industry-standard field research training courses has been developed and volunteers recruited on innovative conservation seasonal programmes to collect data and make the most of limited resources. Owing to the success of the KTP project, a new role within WDCS has been achieved.

WDCS in Scotland has benefited in terms of increased skills, capabilities and the efficiency of its operations as a direct result of the KTP project. Procedures and training protocols have been reviewed, extended and streamlined. All these actions have strengthened WDCS’s strategic and professional position so that the organisation has acquired greater influence, leading to real conservation benefits for Scotland’s marine wildlife. This has furthered the development and position of WDCS on an international basis with the public, scientists and policy makers and also delivered local benefits to the Moray Firth community.

Although the benefits to the charity have been mainly social, there have been some clear financial advantages. The Associate has made a positive contribution to WDCS’s bottom line. Merchandising has been centralised in Scotland which has reduced overhead costs. The value of volunteer hours is not quantified in the profit figures but has increased and volunteers are being used more efficiently and effectively.

The Associate

“KTP enabled me to increase my marine knowledge and put it to use in a practical setting where I have helped to extend the conservation work and facilities at the Centre.”

Alice Pope, KTP Associate

BENEFITS

The KTP Associate brought to this project an MSc with Distinction in Marine Resource Development and Protection. In return, she has received both practical and academic experience in developing educational and training programmes for the Wildlife Centre. As well as acquiring more knowledge of project management, team leadership and budgets, the Associate has received a greater understanding of specialist monitoring equipment and techniques to collect data and use these for the benefit of visitors and students. The Associate’s success in the project has been rewarded with membership of the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) and continuing employed with WDCS as a Scottish Conservation Officer.

RESULTS

- Enhanced marine conservation research, methods and dissemination
- Greater skills in data collection, monitoring and use of specialist equipment
- Professional development and membership of the CMI
- Employment offered and taken with WDCS

Building educational programmes around wildlife has also strengthened the ability of the WDCS to fundraise through campaigns and programmes such as the ‘Adopt a Dolphin’ scheme which is a key source of income. Sales turnover has increased by about £18,000, with the total sales in 2008 reaching over £78,000.

RESULTS

- New research and dissemination activities have been developed
- A more streamlined approach to operations has been forged
- A second Visitor’s Centre has been introduced in North Kessock
- Merchandising has been centralised and overheads reduced
- Annual sales turnover has increased by £18,000
- Annual total sales reached over £78,000 in 2008

The Academic Partner

“This has opened up a number of research and teaching opportunities for the university and the work with WDCS has provided a strong foundation for future collaboration.”

Professor Paul Thompson, Lead Academic, School of Biological Sciences, University of Aberdeen

BENEFITS

This KTP has brought the school new opportunities and particularly in relation to the university’s research and teaching in conservation and management issues. Research has benefited from the greater geographical scope of the school’s fieldwork through the integration of activities by WDCS volunteers. Close liaison with WDCS during its campaign work has enabled the university to target research into those areas where new findings may provide maximum benefit to conservation issues of mutual interest to both parties. In addition, the KTP has influenced teaching because the Centre can be used as a site for visits for undergraduate and postgraduate field courses. As a result of the KTP project, seven student research projects have been established.

RESULTS

- Greater scope and opportunities for research into conservation issues
- Additional interest in marine and conservation courses stimulated
- A wider reputation for the university has been established
- Additional teaching, course and case study material