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# CIRCULAR

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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**ILT Implementation Plan:  
Management and Finance**

Cheylesmore House  
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To  
College principals

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Circular type  
Information and invitation to apply  
for funds

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Summary  
Information on the release of funds  
to assist in the development of  
college ILT infrastructure under  
the FEILT implementation plan.  
Invitation for applications for  
further funds to undertake  
innovative ICT projects

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Reference number: 99/53

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**99/53**

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# ILT Implementation Plan: Management and Finance

## Introduction

1 Council Circular 99/45, *ILT Implementation Plan*, announced the release of funds to colleges in December to assist in the development of college information learning technology (ILT) infrastructure. The annex to this circular provides information about these funds, together with more information about college ILT plans. The appendix to the annex contains an invitation to apply for further money to undertake innovative information and communications technology (ICT) projects.

2 In the December payment to colleges an additional £9.114 million has been provided. Each college will receive the same allocation, which they may wish to supplement, in order to:

- fund development of the college local area network (LAN) infrastructure (£17,000)
- facilitate the purchase or updating of suitable equipment for two ILT champions (£2,000)
- enable vendor-specific training of college technical staff (£2,000).

3 These funds are to assist colleges to develop a robust local infrastructure and to start to prepare staff to take part in the ILT initiative. The Council will be held accountable for the use of these and further ILT funds that will be made available, and will wish to demonstrate to the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) that these funds have achieved real improvements in ILT infrastructure. BECTa will therefore issue a form before the end of the college year so that evidence can be provided of spend against the college ILT strategy, if the college ILT strategy has not been assessed by BECTa, in line with the spirit of the Council's ILT implementation plan. Further details concerning the funds and their use are provided in the annex to this circular.

4 The Council is making £500,000 available for up to 20 college projects exploring innovative uses of ICT in the delivery of learning. This money is to be made available in two phases so that colleges that

are ready to apply now may do so, whilst others may choose to apply for the later phase. Details on the timing of the phases and how to apply for these funds are provided in the appendix to the annex. The closing date is 15 February 2000.

5 Evidence of a sound ILT strategy for the college is the key to qualifying for future ILT funds. The Council has assigned its managing agent BECTa to receive and assess college ILT plans. These plans need to be sent to BECTa by 30 June 2000. The annex to this circular provides further information about the development of ILT strategies.

6 In addition to the above, the Council has assigned UKERNA as its managing agent to connect all colleges to the National Learning Network by March 2001. At least 90 colleges are planned for connection by March 2000. The Council's FEILT committee is continuing to develop the finer detail of the ILT implementation plan. Further information will be provided in the new year.



# ILT Implementation Plan: Guidance

## Management and Financial Implications for Colleges

### Introduction

1 Circular 99/45, *ILT Implementation Plan* outlined the Council's plans for the implementation of the National Learning Network and a range of associated supporting actions. This guidance gives principals notice of the immediate management and financial implications of the initiative for colleges.

### Funding routes

2 Funding will flow through three distinct routes:

- directly to colleges (further details are provided below)
- through the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) (for key central procurements)
- through BECTa (as the Council's managing agent working in conjunction with FEDA and NILTA for development aspects).

3 Circular 99/45 outlined the initiative as a whole. This guidance is confined to the first of these three categories, which is expected to account for a total of a little under £40 million during the three years of the initiative.

### Direct funding to colleges, 1999-2000

4 The Council plans to underpin the development of the National Learning Network with funding direct to colleges to support the strengthening of local area networking and the preparation of key college staff for the main thrust of the initiative.

Acting on the advice of the further education information and learning technology (FEILT) committee, the Council intends to make funding available for the current year on an equal basis for all sector colleges, to ensure that all colleges have a measure of assistance to enable them to prepare for, and take full part in, the initiative.

5 Out of a total of £9.114 million, colleges will each receive £21,000 in December 1999. Further details are provided in table 1.

**Table 1. Division of funding between local area networking and preparation of college staff**

<i>Description</i>	<i>Value</i>
Local area networking developments	£17,000
ILT champions hardware	£2,000
Vendor-specific training for college technical staff	£2,000

6 Colleges should ensure that simple records are maintained to keep a record of college spend on ILT as the Council will wish to account for the use of this and other ILT money later in the year. As the Council's managing agent, BECTa will issue a form before the end of the college year so that evidence can be provided of spend against the college ILT strategy.

7 The decision to allocate more than half of the total funding available for the initiative directly to colleges using formula-driven models is a direct response to the consultation conducted in the spring of this year on *Networking Lifelong Learning*. College delegates made it clear that they preferred this approach to competitive bidding. In a few instances, however, such as that detailed in the appendix to this annex on innovative information and communications technology (ICT) projects, competitive bidding will be unavoidable. Colleges will be expected to use these funds as summarised above in line with their information learning technology (ILT) strategic planning.

### Basis of later funding allocations

8 Direct funding to colleges for later years, 2000-01 and 2001-02, may be allocated according to models which take more account of individual college circumstances. The views of the FEILT committee will be sought on this matter. At present it is anticipated that funding in excess of £6 million and £20 million will be made available to colleges through direct funding in the two years respectively. This funding will be for continued local area network (LAN) developments, for some IT equipment and for the licensing of managed learning environments. Details of arrangements for this spending will be provided in due course.

## Accountability

9 The use of ILT in delivering learning is of great interest to ministers and the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). It is therefore important for the sector to demonstrate that money has been spent for the purposes intended and that it has achieved its objectives. The case for funding was made in the recognition that sector colleges already spend in excess of £100 million annually on ILT-related expenditures. The initiative relates to the expenditure of a total of some £374 million in the period April 1999 to March 2002. It will be vital for the Council to be able to assure the DfEE and the Treasury of the nature and probity of this expenditure.

10 Colleges will be held accountable for the appropriate expenditure of the allocated funding, and will need to demonstrate at the close of each funding period that funding has been used for the purposes for which it was made available, and in the context of effective college ILT strategic planning.

## Monitoring arrangements

11 Within its role as managing agent for National Learning Network developments, BECTa will receive college ILT strategic plans and prepare reports on their quality for the FEILT committee. The committee will, in turn, make recommendations to the Council on the acceptability of these plans for funding purposes. The Council reserves the right to withhold funding from colleges whose ILT planning is deemed to be inappropriate.

12 Initial guidance on effective ILT college strategic planning has been made available on the FE Resources for Learning website ([www.ferl.becta.org.uk](http://www.ferl.becta.org.uk)). It is intended to extend and clarify this guidance throughout the life of the initiative.

13 Evidence of a sound ILT strategy for the college is the key to qualifying for future funds. College strategic plans for ILT covering the period 1999–02 will need to be sent to BECTa for monitoring purposes by 30 June 2000. Information on suitable formats for the submission of strategic plans will be made available in April. ILT planning will need to be demonstrably linked to wider college strategic plans.

## College use of direct funding, 1999-2000

### *Local area networking*

14 The Council will arrange for all colleges to be provided with a 2-megabit per second connection to the Internet by March 2001. A document announcing the phasing of these connections is available on the Council's website. The report of the FEILT committee's infrastructure task group pointed to the need for robust, reliable college LANs to ensure that improved wide area networking provision can be of immediate benefit to students.

15 As well as providing for robust up-to-date networks within buildings, multi-site colleges will need to consider arrangements for providing fast connections between the sections of their LANs in different parts of the estates they manage.

16 The task group considered, and finally rejected, the idea of providing a range of design options to suit various possible college LAN configurations. The different starting points, and the wide variety of existing college arrangements make this an inappropriate task. The task group recommended a minimum specification of a 100 megabits per second backbone, with 10 mb/sec switched to the desktop. Colleges will, perhaps, already exceed this standard in some areas, but there may be sections of the LAN which need to be brought up to the same standard as the rest. Alternatively, colleges may look to improve on these standards, with gigabit Ethernet backbone and 100 mb/s switched to desktop machines, to enable more effective use of networks for transmission of multimedia learning materials.

17 Within the sum to be provided to colleges in December is a notional allocation of £17,000 to assist with the development of reliable local area networking in colleges.

### **Preparing college staff**

18 The FEILT committee's support task group identified two categories of staff who would be vital to the success of the initiative: ILT champions within the college and technical support staff.

### *ILT champions*

19 It is hoped to provide intensive training during the coming summer for two members of staff from each college who will then be enabled to lead ILT staff development within each college. Such staff may, for example, provide leadership for

multi-disciplinary teams, drawn from across colleges to create interactive ILT learning materials; or support curriculum groups in the design of workshop materials for their own teaching subjects. Equally, they may help run internal staff development sessions aimed at increasing staff familiarity with IT and its general application to learning. ILT champions may be staff development tutors, library/resource centre staff or members of the principal's management team with responsibility for ILT developments within the college. Principals will need to consider how such arrangements will best fit with their plans for ILT strategic developments within their colleges.

20 In recognition of the fact that such ILT champions will require permanent access to good-quality IT equipment, the Council is making £2,000 available to each college within the total sum to be provided in December, to facilitate the purchase or updating of suitable equipment for two ILT champions. Associated with this expenditure will be an assumption that colleges will release staff to participate in training sessions during the summer 2000.

***Technical support staff***

21 The FEILT committee's view is that technical support staff represent an invaluable resource for college management teams in pressing forward the initiative. To enable the training of such staff to be enhanced to the standards necessary for the effective implementation of the initiative, the Council will make available to colleges within the December total, £2,000 for vendor-specific training of college technical staff. This means training that relates specifically to the particular technologies used within the college for LAN infrastructure, related software and equipment. Such training might be provided by the suppliers of the equipment itself, or by third parties. Equally, it might be formally certificated or not. However, it is not envisaged that colleges will provide such training themselves for their own staff.

# Innovative ICT Projects: Competitive Bidding Arrangements

1 Based on the success of the QUILT programme, the Council has decided to make £500,000 available for up to 20 college projects exploring innovative uses of information and communications technology (ICT) in the delivery of learning. Such projects are expected to advance the sector's understanding of the potential for new and emerging technologies within the education process, though they might address software technologies such as, for example, open source operating systems, as well as hardware. Equally, they might consider an innovative educational application of established technologies, such as fax or satellite technologies, to solve an unusual problem. Generally, projects are expected to be small-scale trials, proofs of concept rather than roll-out.

2 Funding for these projects will be in two phases of about a year each. Phase 1 will run from early March 2000 to mid-February 2001 and phase 2 from early March 2001 to mid-February 2002. Funding will be awarded on the basis of proposals sent in response to this announcement, and will need to be matched equally by participating colleges in order to secure payment.

3 Successful colleges will be required to provide evaluation reports on their projects in a common format for publication on the FERL website.

## Application process

4 Applications for phase 1 outlining the nature of the intended project, on not more than four sides of A4 paper, should be sent to:

**Innovative ICT Projects**  
**FEILT committee secretariat**  
**BECTa**  
**Millburn Hill Road**  
**Coventry**  
**CV4 7JJ.**

Applications must arrive no later than 15 February 2000.

## Information required

- 5 Applications should indicate:
- innovative technology or application to be trialled
  - target learner group identified (if any)
  - potential benefits to FE sector
  - project management arrangements
  - timescale and deliverables
  - outline budget and cash flow requirements
  - sources of matched funding.
- 6 Applications should be countersigned by the principal of the college, with an undertaking that staff time and access to appropriate facilities will be forthcoming.

## Selection process

7 After initial screening by the project steering committee, the selection will be ratified by the FEILT committee. Successful applicants will be notified in March 2000.

