Request for proposal

from groups of educators

to be involved in the

Engaging with Second Life: Real Education in

a Virtual World (SLENZ) project

Contents

1   Introduction

This Request for Proposal (RFP) document outlines

- the purpose of this RFP
- background information on the project
- information about Second Life to help you understand how you might be involved
- the process by which you can put forward a proposal to be involved
- criteria by which proposals will be assessed.

1.1   The purpose of this RFP

The SLENZ project requests proposals from discipline based educational teams for learning experiences to be developed in Second Life. The project will focus on finding and assessing the effectiveness of innovative ways of teaching (including guided self-learning) in Second Life rather than developing content.

Your team will work with the SLENZ project group to:

- select one or more learning outcomes in a currently delivered, accredited course to teach within Second Life
- design learning activities to support the selected learning outcomes
- discover existing, and develop new, builds within Second Life to support the agreed learning activities
- pilot the learning activities within Second Life
- evaluate the design, development and delivery phases of the project.

Your team will need to teach the same or similar learning outcomes, and include

1   a lead educator who will work closely with the project team to

- read the literature review to understand the potential value add of Second Life in an educational context, and the discipline specific contexts
- work with the project team to
    - o   identify relevant learning objectives on which to focus during the project design, development and delivery phases
    - o   contribute subject-specific content relevant to the learning experiences
    - o   understand the learners
    - o   contribute to the design and development of the learning experiences in Second Life
    - o   help train and mentor educators with support from the project team
    - o   user test the Second Life learning experience
- promote the project to educator colleagues and relevant networks
- actively contribute to the Kiwi educators group in Second Life
- participate in the pilot delivery to students of the Second Life learning experience
- assist design the evaluation of the design, development and pilot phases of the project
- participate in the evaluation of the design, development and pilot phases of the project.

2   a group of educators who will work with the lead educator to

- understand the rationale for the learning design
- advise the lead educator on subject specific issues as required
- attend training on how to facilitate learning within Second Life

- participate in the Kiwi educators group in Second Life
- participate in the pilot delivery of the Second Life learning experiences
- participate in the evaluation of the pilot phase of the project.

While the SLENZ project ultimately needs to work with groups of educators, we welcome proposals from

- individuals who are enthusiastic about the potential for Second Life in education and believe they may be able to identify a group to work with
- groups who are enthusiastic about the potential for Second Life in education but have no identified lead educator at this stage.

The project team may be able to facilitate linking groups and individuals. We encourage you to contact Clare or Terry as soon as possible (See Section 3).

1.2 The project

For a description of the project, please refer to Appendix One.

The SLENZ project team is technically able and dedicated, with extensive international contacts in Second Life. The team will work with the selected educators every step of the way to design the learning experiences, discover and build objects in Second Life and train educators.

The project will reimburse institutions for the lead educator's time working with the team to design learning experiences and develop builds. The project will also cover travel costs to enable the larger group of educators to attend face-to-face training sessions. Institutions whose staff are involved in the project will thus develop their own internal capability to design and facilitate learning activities in virtual environments.

2 Second Life

The literature review, presently underway as part of the project, has identified aspects of Second Life relevant to its use in adult education. They are listed below to inspire and help interested educators think about the relevance of Second Life to their own teaching and learning contexts.

2.1 General points
- Second Life is a virtual world, particularly attractive to those motivated by developing teams and communities, exploring collaborative teamwork, developing social and professional networks, and exploring the creation of digital and virtual objects.
- Second Life provides for both synchronous and asynchronous learning activities suitable for both extrovert and introvert types of learners.
- Second Life activity can usually be enhanced by other forms of educational media, however the pilot is seeking to identify learning outcomes and activities that Second Life can uniquely support.
- Identifying learner styles and personalities can be useful in informing the design and delivery of activities. The design of activities flexible enough to allow for a variety of learning styles would be valuable.
- Unlike many online gaming environments, women and older learners appear to react the most positively to Second Life. It may be useful to bear this in mind both when considering potential students and learning activities.
- Second Life does have a steep initial learning curve and both staff and students who participate in the pilot will require orientation that will be provided by the project team. This needs to be considered when identifying potential pilots.

2.2 What Second Life might be good at (we think and at present)

- **Creating 'enhanced reality' spaces for learning.** By this we mean the opportunity to provide experiences and situations otherwise inaccessible to students such as ancient Rome, as the NASA space museum, the outer planets or scaled up models of the human body. Activities can be developed that allow students to interact with these spaces in innovative ways, such as rearranging atoms in a molecule, or interacting with others in realistic role playing situations.

- **Providing a rich environment for role-playing simulations.** These are currently found in some of the medical, nursing, social work, business and IT areas.

- **Creating metaphorical representations of difficult abstract and intangible concepts**. In Second Life these metaphors could become real; e.g. sub-netting addresses could explode in colourful firework displays or locked mailboxes substitute for database tables.

- **Providing opportunities for students to construct their own meaning and learning through their interaction with Second Life 'builds'**. For example, in the 'build' of Dante's Inferno, visitors are led down through the seven levels of Dante's vision. Visitors are asked to nominate, with reasons, their own inhabitants for these levels. These are then available for others to read, ponder and comment on.

- **Constructing simulations of real world activities.** For example, students could be provided with the means to plant, care for, harvest and successfully market a horticultural crop. Another possible example is the construction of machinery or the design and construction of buildings, either to understand how they work or to investigate aspects such as sustainability. There are also opportunities for students to exploit the provision of the in world economy to study a number of business activities such as marketing.

- **Providing students with the opportunity to practice life skills, such as, job interviews, interpersonal skills and cross cultural communication.** There are several career consultancies and recruitment agencies in Second Life which could be the basis of some of these activities. We believe that small group discussions, when clearly focused, can provide a useful forum, both for open debate and for empowering students who may not engage as readily in a classroom situation.

- **Foreign language acquisition.** Particularly with the use of voice, the study of other languages is becoming a well developed area in Second Life, for example, English Village is a well resourced and major 'build' for English language acquisition.

- **Providing a unique medium for creative arts.** For example, showcasing student work, providing a fascinating stimulus to creative writing, or a possible venue for live music performance. It can also be used to construct machinima (in world videos).

2.3 What Second Life doesn't do well (we think and at present)

- While it is possible to provide both synchronous and asynchronous PowerPoint presentations, we believe that unless these are an important adjunct to other Second Life activities it is usually better served by other online applications.
- Second Life requires a reasonably high level of technical infrastructure in terms of broadband access and speed and graphics capability and processing speed on individual machines.

- Second Life does not have a seamless interface with other web products, although both mp4s, and audio files can be played and live video and audio streams can be captured. General access to the web can be handled via the in world browser window. However, activities that require extensive use of these applications is probably not best suited to the pilot.

3   The RFP process

Responses to this RFP need to include

- contact details for a nominated contact person
- information relating to the selection criteria (see below)
- number of students potentially involved in a pilot across the group
- any other information that you believe would be useful for the selection group to know to support your proposal.

We encourage interested parties (whether individuals or groups) to contact the project leaders, Terry Neal (terry.neal@blendedsolutions.co.nz) or Clare Atkins (clare.atkins@nmit.ac.nz), to discuss any aspect of this process. This is not a standard RFP process. We want to work with you to help you think through what you might be able to do in Second Life. We also want to link interested educators who might not know one another, but are teaching similar learning outcomes. This will increase our chances of piloting use of Second Life with a reasonable sized group of educators.

3.1   Selection criteria

In assessing the proposals, the selection criteria include, but are not necessarily limited to

- support of educators from several institutions who are teaching similar learning outcomes
- sufficient interest from educators who will commit to attending the workshops and to piloting Second Life with their students
- a lead educator who has
  - o demonstrated that they understand the potential for technology (but not necessarily Second Life) to change the way they teach and students learn
  - o experience with emerging technologies
- a lead educator who will be able to be released from teaching responsibilities to work with the project team between December 2008 and June 2009
- commitment from institutional IT teams to understand and implement models from other institutions to provide an IT infrastructure to enable staff and students to use Second Life
- identification of possible learning outcomes from an existing programme, preferably programmes which
  - o sit within qualifications which are level 4 or above
  - o increase literacy, numeracy, or language levels
  - o sit within advanced trade, technical and professional qualifications
- students on the relevant programmes are New Zealand adults
- students on the relevant programmes appear able to
  - o navigate the steep learning curve to use Second Life
  - o pilot use of the learning experience early in Semester 2 2009
- identification of some high level ideas of activities from the 'What Second Life might be good at' list that would support these learning outcomes
- the development team knows of an existing 'build' or can envisage creating a new 'build' to support these learning activities in the time available.

3.2 Anticipated timetable

Activity	Date
RFP issued by SLENZ	12 Sept 2008
Opportunity to talk with Terry and Clare about possible proposals	12 Sept – 17 Oct 2008
RFP submissions due	17 Oct 2008
Selection period	20 Oct – 7 Nov 2008
Preferred educators notified of outcome	7 Nov 2008
Negotiation period to confirm institutional and IT team commitment and release of lead educator	7-30 Nov 2008
Notification to all respondents of the final outcome of the process	30 Nov 2008
Design and development workshop with project team and lead educator	Early Dec 2008

3.3 Responses

Please email responses to project leader, Terry Neal, at terry.neal@blendedsolutions.co.nz by 5 pm 17 October 2008.

Terry can also be contacted on

Phone 04 233 2587
Cell   021 322 332

Appendix One: Project description

The Tertiary Education Commission has funded a project through the Encouraging and Supporting Innovation Fund that aims to understand how multi-user virtual environments might be used to improve learning for our students.

Multi-user virtual environments, in which individuals create avatars, digital representations of themselves to 'live' in a 3D virtual 'world', are offering a revolutionary view of how individuals and educational communities may interact and learn in the future. Anecdotally, these environments are considered to have a number of strengths which differentiate them from other online learning environments. These include the increased engagement of learners with a familiar game-like environment where learning may intentionally be a product of serious 'play' ; the ability to create experiential learning situations not available in "real life"; the opportunity to learn the skills necessary to operate socially, technically and ethically in an on-line global virtual world; and also the opportunity to experience and practice collaborative, cross-cultural problem solving in social networking environments.

Using the multi-user virtual environment Second Life, this project aims to demonstrate the value of these strengths to New Zealand educators and students. The average age of Second Life users is believed to be in the late 20s to mid 30s.

The founding members of the project are Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology (lead), the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, Wellington Institute of Technology and Otago Polytechnic. A number of other tertiary institutions are associated with the project and Telecom and IBM are providing advice and assistance.

The project has seven parts:

- a literature review to better understand the potential of MUVEs for adult education and how others are using them internationally
- work with ITPNZ forums and stakeholders to identify suitable learning outcomes in which to use this technology
- the four partner institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs) work with two selected groups of educators to design learning experiences to achieve the selected learning outcomes and discover or develop resources ('builds') within SL to support the designed learning experiences
- train staff from across the ITP sector who teach the selected learning outcomes
- pilot the learning experiences with learners from across the ITP sector
- evaluate the learning from the phases of the project
- share the learning and resources on the Ako Aotearoa website.

The anticipated benefits of this project are:

- identifying the additional value of a MUVE such as SL to the learning experience, e.g. increased engagement, collaborative problem solving
- identifying the learning outcomes that would most benefit from the use of SL resources
- increased understanding of the benefits and challenges of teaching and learning in global virtual immersive environments for New Zealand educators and learners
- increased capability in designing and developing shareable resources for innovative delivery within SL for NZ educators and learners
- increased capability in teaching and learning within SL for New Zealand educators and learners
- increasing understanding of the benefits and challenges of cross-discipline and cross-institution collaboration in the development of online resources in SL
- the creation of a New Zealand space and community to encourage, support and share best practice in relevant SL education.

Project schedule

This high level project schedule gives an overview of project phases and completion dates.

Objective	Activities	Outcomes/ deliverables	Deliverables/ milestones	Sharing
1. Establish project governance and management	• Appoint project leaders • Establish Project Steering Group (PSG) • Initial project team meeting • Initial PSG meeting and sign off initial project execution plan (PEP) • PSG meet regularly • Regular reporting to PSG by project leader	The project is successfully delivered within agreed timeframes and budget to agreed standards	PSG established and project leader appointed by July 2008 Initial PEP signed off by end of July	
2. Understand pedagogy of teaching in a multi-user virtual environment (MUVE)	• Literature review – generic use of MUVEs (US, Aus, UK especially) ▪ pedagogy ▪ case studies ▪ benefits ▪ effectiveness • Identify initial themes to inform educator selection criteria	Pedagogy for effective use of MUVEs identified	Generic literature review themes identified late July 2008	
2b. Understand pedagogy of teaching in a multi-user virtual environment (MUVE) in tow specific discipline areas	• Literature review – use of MUVEs in specific discipline areas • Report edited •	Pedagogy for effective use of MUVEs in two specific discipline areas identified	Literature review completed by mid Nov 2008	Literature review placed on Ako Aotearoa website
3. Select learning outcomes to pilot educating cross-institutionally in Second Life with New Zealand learners	• Agree criteria for selection based on sector priorities and literature review • Work with stakeholders and ITPNZ forums to select two groups of educators • Work with two educator groups to select relevant learning outcomes • Organise release time for two educators to work with project team	Learning outcomes selected, informed by stakeholder perspective, sector priorities and generic literature review Identified tutors bought into project	Learning outcomes selected by Nov 30 2008	
4. Pilot educating cross-institutionally in Second Life with New	• Design learning experiences to meet the agreed learning outcomes – activities, resources, assessment, tracking	Cross-institutional learning experience piloted within SL Resources developed and	Resources to support agreed learning experiences built within SL by May 2009	Resources available within SL, promoted on Ako Aotearoa

Objective	Activities	Outcomes/ deliverables	Deliverables/ milestones	Sharing
Zealand learners	• Develop the resources within SL • Review and user test material • Train the educators doing the pilot • Pilot the learning experience with learners, including mentoring	available for educators to use	Educators from ITPs trained by June 2009 Learning experiences piloted with learners by Sept 2009	site. Aaron, Clare, Leigh maintain blog of process
5. Establish a New Zealand community of practice for use of Second Life to support teaching and learning	• Facilitate regular interactions within Second Life for New Zealand educators (Kiwi Educators group) • Introduce tutors to the Kiwi Educators community during training	New Zealand community of practice for use of SL to support teaching and learning established	Community of practice active by Sept 2009	Community of practice promoted in SL and on Ako Aotearoa website *Link to CoP work of Ako?*
6. Evaluate educating cross-institutionally in a virtual environment for New Zealand learners	Evaluate the pedagogy and collaboration of the phases of the project i.e. • selection of learning outcomes • design and development • pilot with learners Review report Edit report	Learning from the project captured to inform selection of learning outcomes to support in SL, design of SL learning experiences, development of SL resources to support learning and facilitation in-world	Selection of learning outcomes processes evaluated by Dec 2008 Design and development processes evaluated by July 2009 Pilot with learners evaluated by Oct 2009 Final evaluation report by Dec 2009	Evaluation report placed on Ako Aotearoa website
7. Share the learning	Develop a guide on how to use the 'builds' within Second Life Develop case studies from the two pilots	Guide to use 'builds' and case studies shared	Guide to use 'builds' and case studies completed by Dec 2009	Guide & case studies developed & available on Ako Aotearoa website