WriteAway

Funding Request

2012

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March 2012

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Message from the Chair

2011 was a foundational year for WriteAway, setting the stage for the next level of success in 2012. Significant developments include:

- interested parties from across the BC post-secondary community coming together with the WriteAway Concept Committee to share ideas about online writing support and discuss the WriteAway concept;

- the excitement and promise of the WriteAway concept prompting BCcampus and the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre to step forward and lend their support to the initiative;

- four BC post-secondary institutions, College of the Rockies, Douglas College, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, and Simon Fraser University, demonstrating their confidence and excitement by volunteering to be early adopters in the pilot phase;

- focused British Columbia Electronic Library Network (BCELN) coordination fuelling the momentum towards launch of a pilot phase in spring 2012.
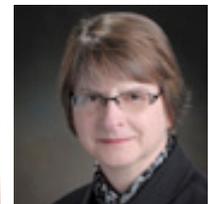
WriteAway's future success will be built upon this strong foundation.

By collaborating to provide online writing support through WriteAway, BC post-secondary institutions are taking advantage of the synergy and cost-efficiencies that collaboration brings. By supporting WriteAway through the Shared Services and Collaborative Services funding, BCcampus is furthering its goals of bringing systemic benefits, supporting institutional needs, and reducing costs. WriteAway also supports the Ministry of Advanced Education's objective of creating a highly skilled, flexible, and adaptive workforce capable of competing and succeeding in the global knowledge economy.

Together with our funders, stakeholders, and early adopters, I'm so pleased to be a part of building this exciting initiative that holds so much potential to benefit our students and the BC post-secondary sector. I look forward to the growth of this new service in 2012!

College of the Rockies Writing Lab

Elaine Fairey
Associate University Librarian, Learning & Research Services, Simon Fraser University

and

Chair, WriteAway Concept Committee
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Writing as a Critical Skill

WriteAway is a proposed collaboration between BC post-secondary institutions working together to create an online writing service for learners across the province. Through WriteAway, learners will connect seamlessly with a network of online tutors and resources focusing on writing assistance.

Effective writing skills are critical learning outcomes acquired at the post-secondary level. They are also some of the most challenging skills to master. By graduation, learners must master how to present ideas in written form in a multitude of contexts: academic essays, laboratory reports, field studies, business cases, and marketing plans. Writing is complex and needs reinforcement in many contexts; it is a developmental skill that requires support at different times and levels throughout a learner's academic journey.

> The single most important skill that a student needs to succeed academically is the ability to write well. Every discipline taught at university requires writing, from business to science, from education to arts. This only makes sense: we live in an information economy and most significant information is communicated in writing.
>
> *- Dr. Paul Budra, Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, Simon Fraser University*

Collaborating on Service

Many institutions recognize the importance of writing skills and offer support services individually. The services are heavily used and benefit many learners, but have reached the limit of what can be achieved with the resources of a single institution.

A high level of interest in WriteAway has been seen at many levels at BC colleges and universities. Collaboration across BC's post-secondary sector will extend writing support services that are currently offered at many institutions.

Leveraging resources through an online service

BC learners in the 21st century are living in an online world, where wireless connections 24x7 to the web are expected as the norm. Learners juggle commitments to school, part or full time employment and family commitments. Only an online service can support them properly at their point of need.

An online collaborative service, supported by many institutions, will make possible the creation of an 'anywhere' service available many more hours than a single institution can offer on its own. This will leverage existing resources and infrastructure, and create a more cost-effective, collaborative model.

Using Past Achievements to Guide Future Successes

WriteAway will build on best practices forged through other collaborative online services. One example is AskAway, an online service that provides BC students at 29 post-secondary institutions with research assistance at the point of need. Through cooperation, cost-sharing, and coordination of existing infrastructure and resources, collaborative services such as AskAway create a service far beyond what any individual institution could provide on its own. Lessons learned from building other post-secondary collaboratives in BC will ensure WriteAway grows from a position of strength.

Benefits of a Collaborative Virtual Writing Service

Strong Writers

Benefits of excellent writing skills are vital for learners, for institutions and employers, and for the wider BC economy and society.

- Learners will achieve greater academic and career success.

- Post-secondary institutions will graduate learners who will achieve higher rates of employment and have a positive view of the value of their educational experience.

- Employers, and British Columbia as a whole, will benefit from employees and citizens who are better able to develop, write, and present their ideas for change and innovation.

> 74% of employers noted that writing was a key skill they sought in all new job hires.
>
> *- Business Council of British Columbia's 2008 survey What Are BC Employers Looking For?*

Strong Partnerships through Collaboration

Partnerships and affiliations are strengthened between post-secondary institutions through collaborating on a common service delivery point. Expertise and knowledge being shared in the early stages of the project has already benefited individual institutions and will only increase as the service is launched.

Strong Support for Learners

No single institution can be expected to offer the extended service hours that can be provided through collaboration with other institutions. The WriteAway service will expand individual institutional online writing assistance offerings by extending the service beyond the single organization.

WriteAway Benefits

Provide a highly accessible service for learners on and off campus.

Create a collaborative service available more hours per week than any single institution could provide.

Assist institutions in their development of innovative educational technology.

Facilitate the sharing of expertise and the creation of a professional community of practice that is diversified into different regions of the province.

Increase equity throughout the post-secondary system via a service which benefits learners at large and small institutions, and in all geographic regions.

Strong Financial Leverage

Joint licensing, collaborative staffing models, centralized coordination, and leveraging existing infrastructure will make it possible to offer online writing support to the largest number of learners, with the least amount of funds.

WriteAway holds great potential as an important investment for the BC post-secondary sector, leveraging a small amount of funding to provide a service well beyond what any individual institution could offer on their own.

From Concept to Implementation: WriteAway Project Plan

The WriteAway project grew from a strong interest by the **Council of Senior Student Affairs Leaders in BC** (CSSAL) in exploring provincial online tutoring service options. Representatives from seven post-secondary institutions met to further develop the concept of a collaborative service in September 2010, and subsequently formalized a WriteAway Concept Committee.

Proof of Concept: WriteAway Pilot Project

Any good idea requires testing to demonstrate future success. Four institutions feel they are ready to be early adopters of the WriteAway proposed project.

The pilot will implement synchronous and asynchronous writing support for learners at four institutions for a one year pilot, May 2012 to April 2013. Institutions that are ready to come onboard throughout this year can do so at anytime. Outcomes from the pilot will provide a foundation for building a larger collaborative WriteAway service.
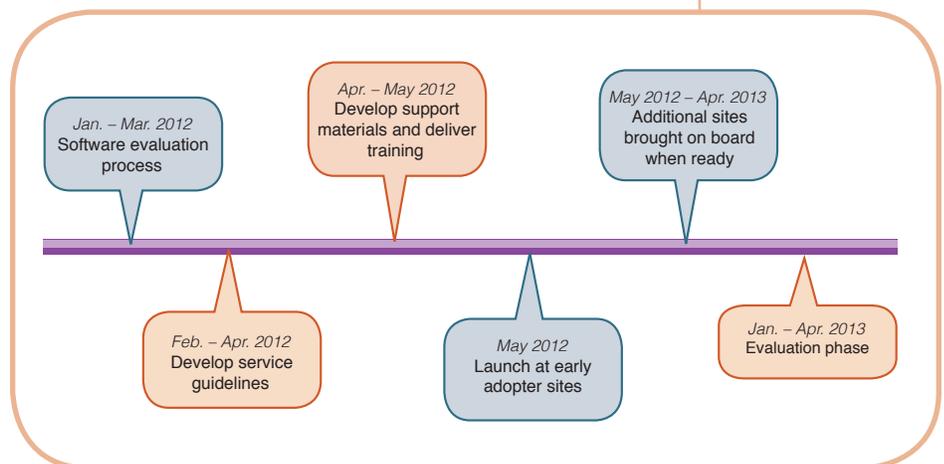
Ideally, the more institutions that participate in the service, the more learners will benefit. During the pilot, and at any time during the initial stages of the project, BC post-secondary institutions will be encouraged to participate as they feel ready to do so. The more institutions that participate in WriteAway, the greater the benefits will be for all.

Early Adopters:

- College of the Rockies
- Douglas College
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Simon Fraser University

Scope and outcomes of the pilot:

- Learners will access the service through a button or link on participating institution web pages.

- Hours of service will ideally extend beyond in-person service hours.

- Each participating institution will provide staff hours (or other agreed upon contribution) in a shared staffing model.

- Service providers from all institutions will answer questions from learners at all institutions.

- The pilot will demonstrate proof-of-concept for future participants and enhance understanding of platform requirements, traffic levels, staffing models and service guidelines.

Jan. – Mar. 2012
Software evaluation process

Apr. – May 2012
Develop support materials and deliver training

May 2012 – Apr. 2013
Additional sites brought on board when ready

Feb. – Apr. 2012
Develop service guidelines

May 2012
Launch at early adopter sites

Jan. – Apr. 2013
Evaluation phase

Governance

WriteAway Concept Committee

The WriteAway initiative has been spearheaded by the WriteAway Concept Committee, made up of stakeholders and representatives from a variety of post-secondary institutions and the writing/learning centre and library communities. The group represents the wide interests of the post-secondary community in BC, including colleges, research universities, teaching universities, and both urban and rural institutions.

The WriteAway Concept Committee will build the WriteAway service by:

- fostering collaboration and trust-building among BC post-secondary writing support services

- coordinating a proof-of-concept pilot phase

- evaluating the pilot to determine scalability and sustainability

WriteAway Concept Committee Membership:

- Tim Atkinson, *Vancouver Community College*

- Lyn Benn, *Kwantlen Polytechnic University*

- Elaine Fairey (Chair), *Simon Fraser University*

- Simon Neame, *Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, University of British Columbia*

- Shahida Rashid, *College of the Rockies*

- Debbie Schacter, *Douglas College*

- Kim Tomiak, *Douglas College* and *Kwantlen Polytechnic University*

- Laurie Waye, *University of Victoria*

- WriteAway Administrative Centre

Writing consultation in the Simon Fraser University Student Learning Commons

Essential Partners

BCcampus

A primary goal of BCcampus is to support institutional collaborations that leverage knowledge, generate benefits for students, and reduce costs. WriteAway is a collaborative service that meets these goals, and reflects BCcampus' commitment to providing flexible, adaptable options that address the diversity of BC life-long learners.

With BCcampus support for both the Shared Service and Collaborative Service aspects of WriteAway, WriteAway will leverage funding to allow students at even the smallest institutions access to online writing assistance, learning support those students would not otherwise have.

Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, University of British Columbia

The Irving K. Barber Learning Centre (IKBLC) seeks to foster and support opportunities for engagement with communities across British Columbia. By partnering with BCcampus and BC ELN to support WriteAway, IKBLC is demonstrating its commitment to supporting teaching and learning, as well as lifelong learning and community engagement, across the BC post-secondary community.

British Columbia Electronic Library Network

BC ELN is known provincially and nationally for providing successful leadership in collaborative projects offering shared services. Following up on their success as the administrative centre for the Electronic Health Library of British Columbia (e-HL*bc*) and AskAway, BC ELN was invited to act as the Administrative Center for the WriteAway project.

BC ELN harnesses the strengths and focuses the energies of many institutions into a single delivered service. It is able to leverage capacity and to provide a solid infrastructure for project management and communication resulting in an efficient service across the BC post-secondary sector.
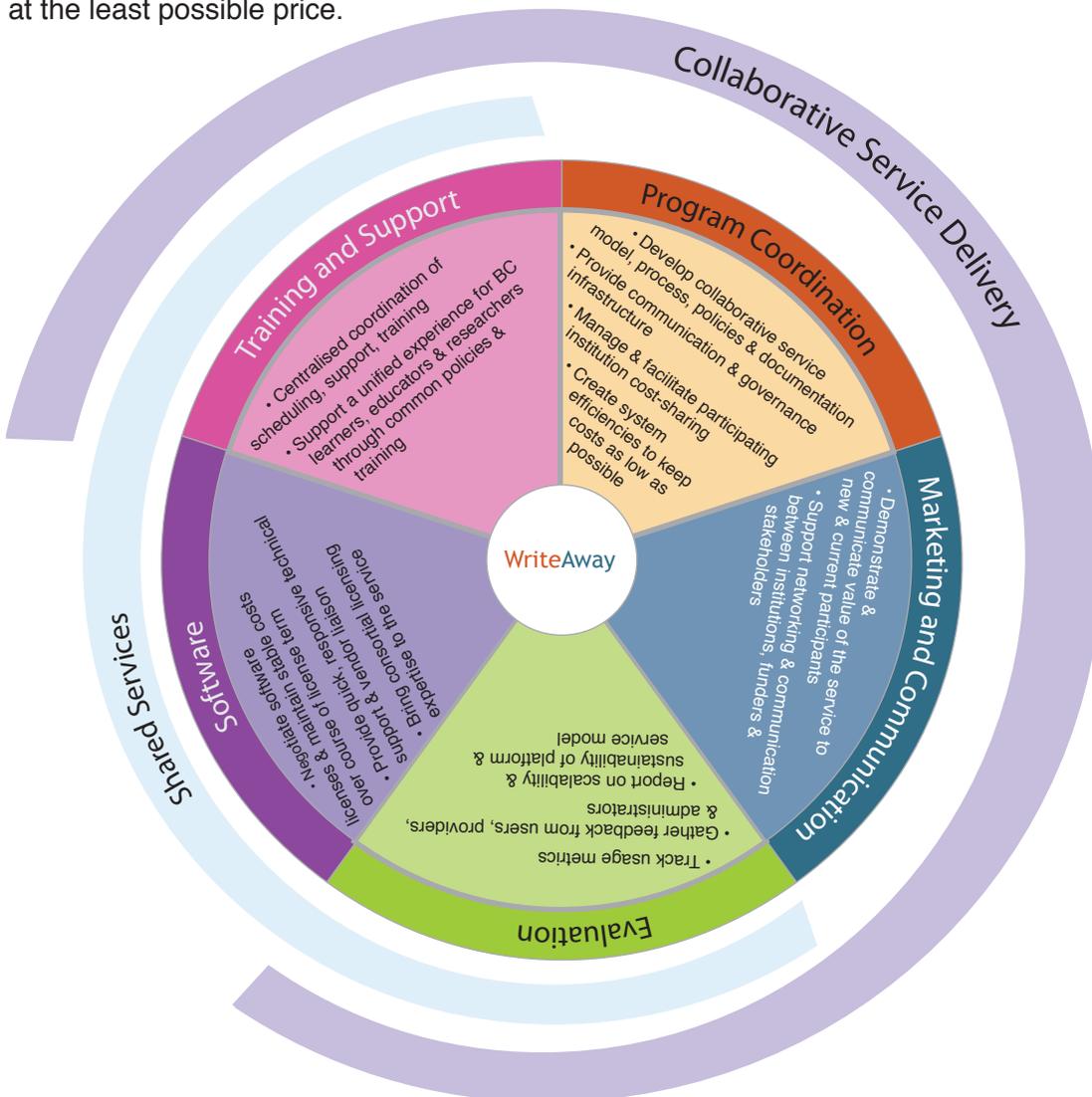
WriteAway as a Shared Service & Collaborative Service

Collaborative Service

Providing a service that could harness system efficiencies while maximizing support for learners across several institutions is how the conversation began with the WriteAway program. Experts from individual institutions from the onset have operated under the realization that sharing their resources, skills, and technology could offer far greater writing support for their learners than each could as an individual institution.

Shared Service

Sharing software, infrastructure, and overall coordination is expected to allow the WriteAway service to run seamlessly across several institutions. Pooling demand for the software results in reduced system wide pricing, and reducing infrastructure costs will allow the service to reach the largest amount of learners at the least possible price.
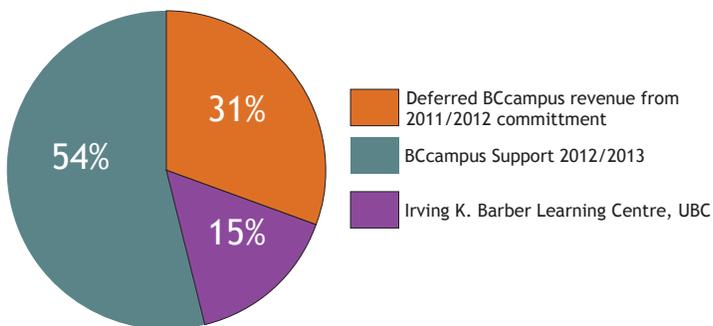
Funding Request

To support WriteAway technical infrastructure, software, governance, and service support, a request of $35,000 is submitted to BCcampus for Shared Services and Collaborative Service seed funding.

Funding from BCcampus for 2012/2013 will provide critical implementation support to build the foundation for a successful collaborative service. A fully-funded pilot phase will ensure that institutions have the opportunity to understand what the service can offer, building trust in the initiative. Many institutions have expressed interest in joining WriteAway once they see it operational, so a successful pilot phase is critical to build on that interest. Once institutions understand the value of WriteAway for their students, we anticipate moving to a sustainable, operational funding model with participating institutions partnering with funders to support the service.

WriteAway - online writing support

	2012/2013 Proposed $	
	Revenue	**Expenses**
Deferred BCcampus revenue from 2011/2012 committment	20,000	
BCcampus Support 2012/2013	35,000	
Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, UBC	10,000	
Total	**65,000**	
Governance / Service Support		30,500
Software / Technical Infrastructure		34,500
Total		**65,000**
REVENUE - EXPENSES		-

WriteAway Financial Support

- 31% Deferred BCcampus revenue from 2011/2012 committment
- 54% BCcampus Support 2012/2013
- 15% Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, UBC

An online collaborative service, supported and staffed by many institutions, will make possible the creation of an "anywhere" service available many more hours than a single institution can offer on its own. This will leverage existing resources and infrastructure, and create a more cost-effective, collaborative model.

- WriteAway, bcwriteaway.ca

Foundations for the Future

The Concept Committee and the Administrative Centre are working diligently to lay a strong foundation for WriteAway's future success. Subcommittees made up of representatives from early adopter sites will research, gather community feedback, and make recommendations for a suitable platform and service guidelines for WriteAway. Ensuring that WriteAway's development is always driven by the needs of participating institutions will create a strong foundation for future participants.

Once the WriteAway pilot phase has been launched with early adopter sites, the focus will turn to supporting other post-secondary institutions that wish to join the service. On-going evaluation, communication, and development will ensure that the service remains aligned with the needs of participating institutions. The greater the number of institutions participating in the collaborative, the greater the benefits will be for all participants.

Looking ahead, WriteAway will illuminate the potential for expanded online tutor support across many other disciplines. Experience with a collaborative online tutoring platform will enhance understanding of software requirements for an expanded service. User feedback will provide greater understanding of student needs and perspectives.

The Concept Committee and the Administrative Centre look forward to a continuing collaboration with BCcampus as we lay the foundation for a service that holds such potential for outstanding benefits to the BC post-secondary sector. By supporting innovative learning services like WriteAway, we're supporting the Ministry of Advanced Education's work of making BC a destination of choice for students from Canada and abroad, and supporting student retention throughout the post-secondary system.
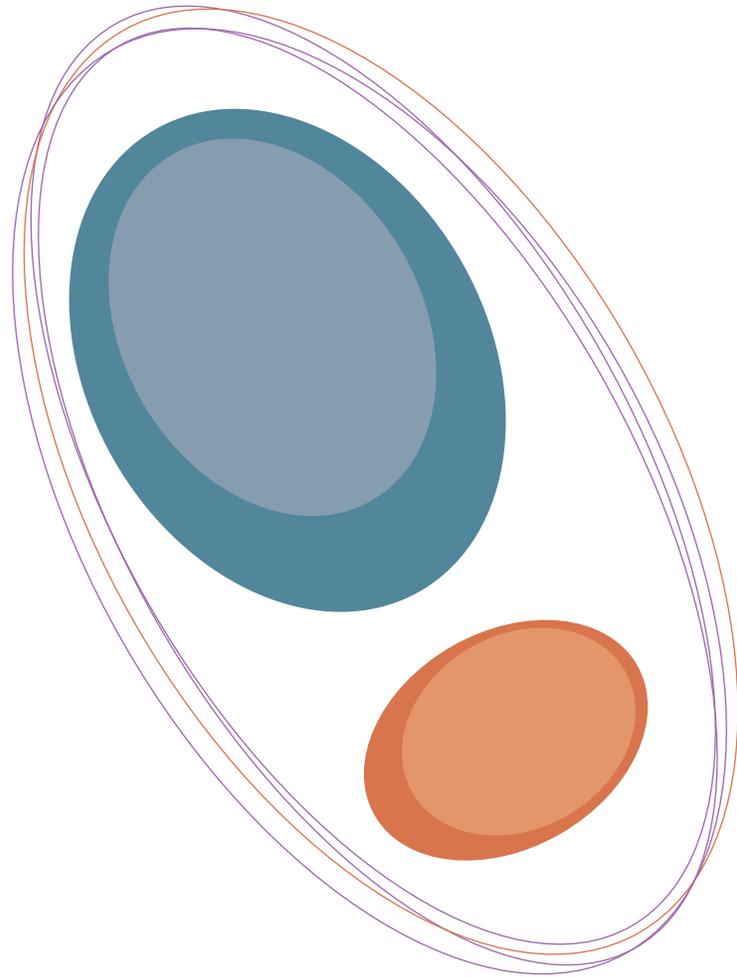
The Software Selection Subcommittee will

- identify functional requirements for the operation of WriteAway;

- evaluate vendor proposals and compliance with requirements;

- gather feedback from early adopters and the wider community; and

- make a recommendation to the Concept Committee of the software that best fits WriteAway's currently outlined needs.

The Service Guidelines Subcommittee will

- review current writing support practices at BC post-secondary institutions, and

- make recommendations for WriteAway service guidelines to the Concept Committee.

WriteAway