

PRESS RELEASE

LEARNJAM AWARDED INNOVATE UK FUNDING TO TACKLE EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY CHALLENGES IN ONLINE LEARNING

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LearnJam, a UK-based digital learning design agency, has been awarded funding to help organisations build digital learning products that are more inclusive through Innovate UK's dedicated COVID-19 innovation recovery fund.

Summary

- The COVID-19 crisis has dramatically accelerated the transition to online learning in all sectors
- Moving content online can partially or entirely exclude some already marginalised learners from the learning process
- LearnJam's goal is for learning and training providers to develop their awareness of equality, diversity and inclusivity (EDI) issues in online learning, then to put in place practical solutions to mitigate the issues of exclusion and lack of access to their online courses and programmes

The COVID-19 crisis has dramatically accelerated the transition to online learning in all sectors. Training providers, learning product developers, educational publishers and in-company learning and development teams have all been forced to move online rapidly. However, one aspect that remains largely unaddressed is the fact that moving online can partially or entirely exclude some learners.

Some of the barriers are systemic, such as: lack of equipment, poor connectivity, a lack of basic digital skills, or a home environment in which online learning is difficult or impossible. Some issues are related more directly to the design and delivery of digital learning content, such as: a lack of consideration of Special Educational Needs (SEN), representation of ethnic minorities, safe online learning spaces for girls, and so on.

LearnJam believes urgent action is required to mitigate this exclusion from opportunities to learn and develop new skills – especially as the UK looks towards sustainable economic recovery post-COVID-19.



“Digital learning experiences have the potential to be very effective, but if they’re not designed with due attention to barriers to access, they also have the potential to be quite exclusive. We want to make sure no one is left behind by the sudden and dramatic global increase in online learning brought about this year by COVID-19.”

– Lucy Williams, Project Lead at LearnJam

LearnJam has helped businesses and organisations across a range of sectors to create online learning products and experiences since 2013. It is using its allocation of Innovate UK’s Sustainable Innovation Fund (SIF) to develop practical resources to help learning and training providers develop their awareness of EDI issues in online learning. Using LearnJam’s innovative EDI framework and toolkits, these organisations can then put practical solutions in place to mitigate issues of exclusion and lack of access to their online courses and programmes. Over time, LearnJam hopes that EDI awareness becomes a baseline capability for any learning organisation.

“As a learning design community it’s essential that we continually evaluate, adapt and refine our approaches, and together push towards better, more inclusive, humanity-centred online learning products.”

– Lucy Williams, Project Lead at LearnJam

Nearly 1,200 companies across the UK shared £134 million of Innovate UK’s Sustainable Innovation Fund (SIF). Innovate UK Executive Chair Dr Ian Campbell said: “In these difficult times we have seen the best of British business innovation. The pandemic is not just a health emergency but one that impacts society and the economy. LearnJam’s project, along with every initiative Innovate UK has supported through this fund, is an important step forward in driving sustainable economic development.” ([Innovate UK SIF funding announcement](#))



LearnJam helps companies develop digital learning solutions that are effective and engaging. They do that by combining research-based learning science with a design thinking process that puts learners needs and company goals at the centre of every decision. Their clients include Pearson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge Assessment English, Babbel, Rosetta Stone, EtonX, Oxford University Press and the British Council.

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