

Go Create Grant accelerates development of online learning programmes – helping thousands of students at a critical time.

An Innovation Support for Business (ISfB) 'Go Create' grant provided a boost for online learning company, Educake. Their investment in developing 2 new products really paid off when COVID-19 struck.



Even before coronavirus thrust online learning into the popular spotlight, investment in Edtech had been soaring, almost doubling in 2018 to 2019. Britain is the main European hub for this expanding industry and Oxfordshire is a growing hotspot.

Since 2013, Oxford-based education company, Educake, has provided curriculum-based homework and review programmes for GCSE and Key Stage 3 subjects. It has steadily expanded its range of services and created an extensive resource for teachers to use in their teaching plans.

The company bank of tens of thousands of questions and answers are all rigorously researched, and learning programmes designed around national examination board curricula. They are designed as reinforcement for learning and can be set as homework, providing instant marking and feedback to students. They also deliver valuable assessment and performance information for teachers about areas of study which a student finds difficult and may need extra support to progress.

The company's own research shows that teachers can save as much as 5 hours a week using the online homework system because marking and assessment information is provided: giving teachers valuable time which can be invested productively elsewhere.

Help from a Go Create grant and ISfB

"As interest in Edtech took off, we needed to keep innovating," managing director Charley Darbshire explains. "The most significant subjects we wanted to introduce to our portfolio was English. Our programmes are highly innovative in subjects which are fundamental parts of secondary education. We needed to be ready as soon as possible and invested in developing the programme last year. The version for English was launched in June 2019.

Development of these new programmes was accelerated by a Go Create grant from OxLEP's ISfB programme. Charlie says "It is expensive and technically demanding to create learning platforms like these and in a sector that is evolving quickly, delaying could have been problematic."

“ The grant enabled us to get Educake for English fully developed and launched far more quickly than we would have been able to do without the support ”



Ready for COVID-19 teaching online

The timing of the investment and use of the grant funding could not have been better. Already popular, use of Educake's products really took off when all school studies began to be delivered online. Charley says being ready to respond when the pandemic closed schools was an important moment for the company: "It underlined the importance of pushing forward with our innovations and getting the support we needed. The evidence came when our products were being heavily used by even more teachers during the pandemic. They urgently needed good online material for their lockdown classes."

Across all Educake's portfolio of subjects, more than 250 million questions were answered by pupils before the school year ended.

The newly launched GCSE English package (the only one of its kind) saw a big surge in use, with over 700 more schools using it during

lockdown. Hundreds more signed up ready for the beginning of the new school year too. "It was an extremely busy period" Charley explained, "but we were ready when the demand was greatest."

Having accelerated its plans to develop the services, Educake was able to free up more resources within the business to make other improvements to its learning platforms. It is now more inclusive for schools seeking to use it, especially during the pandemic lockdown. "We developed apps for Android and iPhone devices, making it easier for more students to access the resources. These are most important in households where a mobile phone may be the only way to access online resources. And we added simple click buttons to allow content to be shared on sharing platforms such as Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams."

The Education Technology sector was always going to get bigger, but through support from the OxLEP ISfB programme, Educake secured a significant opportunity to compete when it mattered most: as the events of lockdown and coronavirus unfolded.

Find out more about Educake at www.educake.co.uk
Email: support@educake.co.uk
Tel: 01865 800 808



Find out how OxLEP Business & Innovation Support for Business (ISfB) programme can help you and your business.

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business@oxfordshireLEP.com
01865 897 181
oxfordshirelep.com/isfb