

West of England Partnership  
Skills & Competitiveness Board  
15 September 2010

## Skills for Sustainable Growth – A consultation on the future direction of skills policy

### Purpose

1. The appended executive summary of the Skills for Sustainable Growth Consultation Response Form outlines the BIS (Department for Business Innovation & Skills) emerging vision for skills policy, and explores some key areas where they are seeking further views. This represents the first major expression of the new government's thinking on skills policy and reflects some of the action which it has already taken in giving greater flexibility to training providers, particularly colleges, and placing new emphasis on the needs of the learner. The Skills & Competitiveness Board is asked to consider and give views on four key questions, to inform a West of England Partnership response.

### Background

2. In order to provide the opportunity for discussion, it is proposed that the Board focus specifically on questions 10, 13, 20, 21, each highlighted in the appendix. These questions are either:
  - a) Linked to the possible role of a local employer-led board in providing a means of holding deliverers to account (in an unbureaucratic way)
  - b) Linked to the skills and business growth objectives of the LEP (e.g. enterprise development)
  - c) A means of promoting policy solutions which we are already implementing (i.e. on college partnerships)
3. Above each of the highlighted questions there is a brief summary of what the report says, highlighted in bold.
4. It will of course be possible to incorporate the Board's views on other specific questions either at the meeting or before submission of our response.
5. The deadline for submission to BIS is 14 October 2010.

### Recommendation

That the Board consider the key questions and respond as appropriate.

### Appendix

Executive summary of the Skills for Sustainable Growth consultation response form.  
(A full version of the document can be downloaded at <http://www.bis.gov.uk/consultation>)

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**BIS** | Department for Business  
Innovation & Skills

**SKILLS FOR SUSTAINABLE  
GROWTH**

Consultation response form

JULY 2010

## Skills for Sustainable Growth response form

If you are unable to use the online comments boxes to record your responses, please complete the questionnaire below and send it to:

Atif Rafique  
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills  
1 Victoria Street  
London SW1H 0ET

Phone: 020 7215 1910  
Email: [skills@bis.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:skills@bis.gsi.gov.uk)

The Department may, in accordance with the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, make individual responses available on public request.

The closing date for this consultation is 14 October 2010.

**Name:**

**Organisation (if applicable):**

**Address:**

Please tick the option below which best describes on whose behalf you are responding:

<input type="checkbox"/>	General Further Education College
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sixth Form College
<input type="checkbox"/>	Charity or social enterprise
<input type="checkbox"/>	Training Organisation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Local Government
<input type="checkbox"/>	Individual
<input type="checkbox"/>	Large employer (250+)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Medium employer (50 to 250 staff)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Small employer (10 to 49 staff)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Micro employer (up to 9 staff)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Trade union or staff association
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please describe):

## Principles for a skills strategy

1. We welcome views on these principles and whether there are others we should consider.

2. How can we further simplify the skills system, including the number, roles and responsibilities of the many organisations working in the system?

3. In view of the current fiscal deficit, what areas of public investment in skills could be reduced and where could private investment be increased? What are the main constraints on changing the balance between public and private investment and how could these be overcome?

## A respected and credible training offer

4. How could the Apprenticeship programme be improved? What can be done to increase the proportion of apprentices progressing to Level 3 and beyond? What and how should employers contribute to Apprenticeships?

5. We welcome views on how best to support people who might in time benefit from an Apprenticeship but who do not currently have the skills to begin one.

6. We welcome views about progression from Level 3 Apprenticeships into higher education, including whether there is demand for Higher Apprenticeships at Levels 4 and 5.

7. How should we ensure that training leads to real gains in skills, knowledge and competence and not just the accreditation of existing skills?

8. How can we incentivise colleges and training organisations to offer a flexible and cost-effective 'needs-led' offer for people who are out of work or at risk of becoming unemployed?

9. How can we encourage colleges and training organisations to make the transition from learning to work as smooth as possible, enabling progression in the workplace, as well as to further learning?

**10. Colleges have an important role in the delivery of enterprise education. There are strong arguments, both economic and social, for developing qualities that enable individuals to be enterprising, either in the workplace or setting up their own businesses and to succeed in doing so. Colleges have strong roots in communities and can provide courses from basic skills to higher education.**

**10. How can we better promote enterprise education in further education colleges and throughout the training system?**

## Funding and entitlements

11. Should Government continue with an entitlements based approach? How can we ensure that Government money is targeted where it is needed most and where it will achieve most value?

## Helping individuals and employers choose the learning they want

12. How can the learning market be made to work more efficiently, effectively and economically and to be more responsive and accountable to demand by individuals and employers, while also delivering value for money?

**13. Currently, employers are able to shape the provision through the work employer led bodies carry out to quality assure qualifications before they are placed on the Qualifications and Credit Framework. It is not appropriate for Government to influence a skills strategy for an individual part of the economy so we need a simple (localised) system that responds to well informed choice.**

**13. We welcome views on how best to ensure employers are able to shape the skills system to meet their needs.**

14. We are interested in views on what more might be needed to make the system responsive to employer needs.

15. Which qualifications have most value for employers and learners? Which do not have value? How do we evolve the Qualifications and Credit Framework so that it focuses on the former and removes the latter?

16. How can we improve the accessibility and quality of careers information, advice and guidance services for adults?

17. We welcome views on the vision for lifelong learning accounts, and their potential usefulness.

18. We welcome views on approaches to informing learners and employers including how better information can be made available while reducing bureaucracy.

### **Giving colleges and training organisations the freedom to respond**

19. We welcome views on our planned measures for simplification and freeing colleges and training organisations.

**20. A new approach is needed to enable learners, employers and the general public to make choices about what, where and when they wish to learn. This work will focus on using the Framework of Excellence in FE, sharing college business plans and a quality labelling system for the courses they offer to enable the learners and employers to make an informed choice.**

20. How can we enable colleges and training organisations to be more efficient and responsive to the needs of employers, learners and their community but without adding new layers of control by local bodies?

**21. This is about reducing accountability to Government and instead giving accountability to service users.. The document sees the LEP and colleges working together in a relationship based on mutual interest in serving the local economy and leaving the path free for the colleges and training providers to concentrate on the needs of learners and employers.**

21. What mechanisms could we use to hold colleges and other training organisations to account for their performance in responding to employers' needs and for prioritising training that adds real economic value?

**Incentives to train in priority areas**

22. Do we need a framework that will enable and encourage employers and individuals to invest in training in priority areas and for colleges and other training organisations to provide appropriate courses?

23. Should we promote training innovation, particularly in rapidly changing or wholly new areas of the economy? If so, how might we do this?

24. How can we ensure employers can access high quality labour market information?

**Encouraging a more productive workforce**

25. What would enable businesses to use skills as a driver of productivity and business improvement?

26. We welcome views on ways in which businesses can be encouraged to increase the UK's leadership and management capability to create better run and more highly performing businesses.

### **Reinvigorating adult and community learning**

27. How could we encourage the development of productive partnerships with third sector organisations?

28. We welcome views on new ways that colleges could be used to support the community.

29. How could adult and community learning be reinvigorated? We especially welcome ideas for how businesses and others could be encouraged to engage in supporting local community learning to help create local ownership and momentum.

### **Measuring success**

30. We welcome views on those indicators of success would be most useful to you or your organisation.

### **Do you have any other comments that might aid the consultation process as a whole?**

Please use this space for any general comments that you may have.

Comments on the layout of this consultation would also be welcomed.