

Skills & Competitiveness Board – FE Agreement

Purpose

1. The Board is invited to agree the attached document, the Joint Skills and Training Agreement (Appendix 1).

Background

2. Members will be aware that discussions have been underway with the Further Education colleges in the West of England to develop an agreement committing both sides to collaboration on delivering a plan for skills and training for the Partnership area.
3. The colleges have now agreed the Joint Skills and Training Agreement attached.
4. The agreement is an important element of the “people” strand of the Local Enterprise Partnership bid.

Body of Report

5. The agreement offers the opportunity to:
 - a) Recognise FE as a key partner in the delivery of skills and competitiveness
 - b) Reflect the importance of the colleges working together in supporting the needs of the single economy
 - c) Provide a realistic basis for meeting current and future business demands in terms of skills across the Partnership area
 - d) Offer real opportunities for more cost-effective working at a time of serious budget constraints
6. Assuming this Board’s agreement, there will be a formal signing ceremony following today’s Board meeting (6pm, 15th September) with Dr Paul Phillips of Weston College signing on behalf of the five colleges. Members are welcome to attend.
7. The first phase of joint planning will follow immediately with members of the WEP team and representatives from each college forming a small working group to develop a plan for submission to this board in November. It would be useful at this stage to identify a small number of board employer representatives willing to consider the draft plan before it goes formally to the board.

Recommendation

8. That the Joint Skills & Training Agreement is agreed.
9. That the Skills & Competitiveness Board nominates representatives willing to be involved with the draft plan prior to the November Board meeting.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Joint Skills and Training Agreement – FE Providers and the Skills & Competitiveness Board

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Joint Skills and Training Agreement

FE Providers and the Skills & Competitiveness Board

This agreement is a key element in the strategy of the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership to secure the growth of jobs and prosperity in the Partnership area. The government has proposed that Colleges and the Local Enterprise Partnerships should work together to anticipate and meet the needs of employers and the local economy. We agree with the government that “Skills and training are a central component of this, contributing to employment, productivity and economic growth”. Further Education (FE) institutions play a crucial role in providing those skills for the local population. The Agreement reflects a genuine partnership between the FE colleges acting in consortium and the Enterprise Partnership of which they are a member. The primary relationship for colleges is with their customers - learners and employers. This agreement - while providing a framework of accountability to the local business - will avoid placing additional burdens on colleges that could interfere with this primary relationship. The agreement will run alongside the Local Enterprise Partnership overall plan and – like the plan – will initially be for three years.

Joint Skills and Training Agreement

FE Providers and the Skills & Competitiveness Board

Shared Commitment

Aims

- To drive up skills levels and employment in the West of England particularly in those sectors and locations critical to the growth of the economy
- To increase employer engagement and private sector investment in training
- To support individuals to gain employment by improving employability and basic skills
- To strengthen the role, value and effectiveness of the FE sector in delivering those skill levels

Results

The MAA committed the sub-region to achieving an additional 5,500 level 3 and 6,500 Level 2 qualifications over its lifetime. In the light of the new flexibilities given to individual colleges, and more importantly the emphasis given to outcomes rather than numbers of qualifications, we will need to agree what the results will be in the light of our working together on the above objectives. In particular though we should be trying to link the results to the economy and the emerging needs of business i.e. *the agreement should be about which areas need to be developed or safeguarded in order to deliver the skills which the business base needs now and tomorrow.*

Responsibilities

Skills & Competitiveness Board (S&CB)

1. Labour Market Intelligence i.e. providing routine and regular information (hard and soft) on the needs of employers in the Partnership area.

2. Business Engagement i.e. articulating the case for training investment, promoting greater levels of investment through more targeted provision of publicly funded or subsidised support.
3. Advocacy i.e. influencing National and Regional Agencies in allocating or prioritising funds for the sub-region (e.g. SFA, BIS, YPLA, DCLG)

Joint

4. Bidding for additional funding – (may include wider partners e.g. voluntary & community sector)
5. Joint Planning, ensuring that provision matches economic growth priorities in terms of balance and volume, relevance and flexibility especially in relation to key sectors, locations and client groups
6. Joint action (e.g. emergencies, specific projects)

FE Colleges

7. Allocation of lead roles
8. Safeguarding and building relevant Service Delivery

Tasks

- To promote the need for SFA investment in training for higher level skills
- To improve skills progression for young people and adults through creating flexible provision
- Encouraging long-term employer investment plans, further developing training in the workplace
- Identifying and meeting the needs of the new growth sectors in the economy
- Developing and implementing Public Service Compacts with the Unitary Authorities and Health Service organisations
- Encouraging and delivering workforce development in other high-employment sectors such as retail and hospitality
- Targeting employment and skills activity on key development locations and projects in the West of England
- Improving the engagement of individuals in skills development – focusing on the priority wards
- Developing a clear pathway to jobs and accreditation for individuals undertaking learning for employability

Processes

1. Baselineing 2011
 - a) Initial skills analysis – where we are and what we want
 - b) Sector reviews
2. College response – collective and individual
 - a) Assessment of match with current delivery
 - b) Development of response to new or newly defined needs and gaps in supply
3. Joint statement of what needs to be done
4. Annual review of
 - a) Labour market needs
 - b) College allocations
 - c) College plans
5. Extension to private sector providers where appropriate