



## EVALUATION REPORT



**PROJECT TITLE: Basic Skills for All**

**PROJECT REF NO: ESF/0203/088**

**LEAD ORGANISATION: ABF Ltd**

### Overview of the Project Activity and Partners

The aim of the project is for the Asian Business Federation (ABF) to employ a Basic Skills brokerage specialist, who will work with mainstream basic skills agencies, to improve the basic skills needs of minority ethnic workers, across the whole of the Lancashire area. The project has been delivered in partnership with the following agencies:

The Business Link East Lancashire (workforce development team),  
Business Link West & North Lancashire (workforce development team),  
Learning & Skills Council (Basic Skills),  
College Representatives,  
Basic Skills Agency,  
Learndirect and  
East & West Lancashire Learning Partnerships

### Achievements of the Project

The Project met the following core outputs:

To promote basic skills development within employees from a minority ethnic background in the workplace.

To engage **45** minority ethnic businesses in developing their employees basic skills.

To recruit **350** minority ethnic employees who will enrol onto a basic skills course.

To engage **15** minority ethnic businesses for IIP as a result of basic skills intervention and work force development.

To establish a steering group and build a long term relationship with basic skills providers in the Lancashire area.

To have **20** solid case studies by the end of the project.

Furthermore, the following successes were achieved, which has provided gross added value to the project.

- Stimulated further demand from within both the business and wider community.
- Stimulated the desire for learning at all levels.
- Maximised the voluntary (ABF) sector links with disengaged learners.
- Mutuality of success shared, between learner and provider.
- Flexible delivery model has enhanced the quality of learning.
- Increased learner development in basic skills in comparison to other basic skills provision in the area.
- Promotion of innovation, technology and best practices.
- Increased long-term employability.
- For the 1<sup>st</sup> time it has tackled the traditionally introverted approach of Asian businesses.
- Enhanced business skills.

#### Areas of Innovation

By delivering this project, the ABF has as a result provided the following:

Added value to the LSC's basic skills brokerage service to assist employers of Ethnic heritage to address basic skills deficits.

Raised the skills levels by increasing the number of EM adults with qualifications.

Increased the number of employees in training.

Mentors and learning champions from within the EM business community identified and promoted.

Addressed traditional provider under capacity to deliver basic skills in a way that is unique and bespoke for the cohort.

Appropriate and effective mechanisms were undertaken to recognise and accredit achievements and qualifications gained.

Increased aspirations for additional assistance to enhance 'skills for life' for the target group.

Strengthened support mechanisms both within and outside employment resulting in increased confidence for those with basic skills needs to address their problem.

Has helped tackle the barriers for those people disengaged from learning in accessing bespoke training.

## Identification of Areas of Good Practice and Areas for Improvement

The added value of this project is that this is the first time that an outreach element towards meeting the basic skills needs of minority ethnic businesses will be met via an organisation that is being led by the private sector minority ethnic business representatives.

By receiving this funding we have been able to extend our current provision and thus enhance our core activities (i.e. To be responsive to all minority ethnic businesses, To strive to understand their needs and add value to their business, To encourage minority businesses to adopt a culture of business development, For the ABF to develop an inclusive, reliable, seamless, coherent, integrated business support infrastructure, To ensure minority ethnic businesses needs are catered for and implemented as part of an overall strategy by public sector organisations).

Without funding from the LSC, this project would not have been undertaken in the same way.

The recruitment of the basic skills brokerage officer has been identified as a good practice as they have been working very closely with mainstream basic skills organisations in the delivery of basic skills courses. They have also become a valuable resource to all partners when dealing with Minority Ethnic businesses as well as 'opening the doors' for other organisations to carry out the delivery in partnership with the ABF.

The usage of an assortment of mediums to effectively promote our 'skills for life' activity has generated appropriate delegates onto the programme.

## Lessons Learnt

A significant amount of time spent on the programme was educating and re-education the cohort, this was envisaged at the outset, but the true scale of this task was only fully realised upon delivery.

The needs of the cohort was not fully met, due to restrictions of project i.e. payment was based on beneficiaries and not on multiple programme needs of an individual.

Service Level agreement with partners. Due to a loss of a significant beneficiary numbers to one of our partners (Learndirect) we were unable to input these learner details into the data capture system. Equally as important was that these numbers were not included in the overall LSC beneficiary targets for Lancashire. These numbers would have enabled the ABF to exceed our targets for the project.

Although all of our sessions made use out of full day workshops, it was identified that our client base had difficulty in arranging back-up at their organisation, mainly due to the micro sized business structure. However, this was realised early on in the project, but, it was considered, in conjunction with our delivery partners, that a full day was preferred as the course content would not have been fully understood/appreciated in a half day delivery.

As the project was underway there was a change in the project management, this impacted in the continuity of the project. There was no contingency plan for this situation.

Quick turnaround. This was identified in many aspects including the LSC's ad hoc requirements for new documentation being introduced mid process (de minimus, company eligibility and new ILR forms) signed off.

In terms of delegates non-attendance, which led to continual changes of the costs entailed i.e. tutor costs, catering and location.

Generating delegate numbers to replace those non-attendeers. Again, this was to be expected due to the size and nature of the catchment, but the reality of the situation has

not been as easy to plan for.

During the projects lifetime the delivery was more effective and more professional in its management, although this is a good thing, it does not bear good in that the project has come to a finish. The ABF has created a market for where there has been no attention given by the mainstream support agencies in the past and now there is a need to continue the work, which the ABF has generated. The acid test now will be the reaction to the closure of LSC funds to sustain this activity; in the manner of current workshop delivery, as it has effectively altered the EM landscape for required learning.

#### Dissemination of Good Practice including Details of Dissemination Materials Produced

A toolkit of good practice and dissemination of materials has been produced ongoing and compiled. This has been available for the LSC CE Barbara Gill to evidence and copies of this are available for the LSC if need be.

#### Details of Publicity Undertaken (attach copies of any advertising/publicity materials produced)

Promotional material, in both English and Asian languages; these posters were placed at Community Centres, Businesses and Access points. Leaflets were also produced which were sent to all member Businesses via mailshot.

Regular case studies and promotional features were printed in specialist Ethnic Heritage press i.e. The Asian Image and the Asian Leader.

Website. The ABF website has space allocated specifically to its Basic Skills provision. This was continuously updated and fresh material loaded to highlight the LSC project

Events. Having a promotional presence at different events has allowed ourselves to showcase not only existing members, but also, the wider community of our Basic Skills work that is being undertaken. This has generated a number of enquiries from different agencies in being a part of it.

Radio. The ABF used a specialist Radio Station (Radio Ramadan) to broadcast the work of the Basic Skills project. This was 2-fold, in having an advertisement message played 5 times a day, as well as an additional presence in terms of regular 30 minute daily business slots.

ABF Business Directory. There are 2 full-page advertisements with LSC logo, highlighting the LSC project.

Text messaging was also a medium utilised in order to promote the message of the Basic Skills courses to our member businesses. This was felt as being vital in order to reinforce the other promotional activities being undertaken.

#### Case study

20 strong Case Studies have been compiled and used in promoting awareness to the Basic Skills project, using the aforementioned publicity vehicles. These have been made available to the LSC Basic Skills CE Barbara Gill and are available upon request.

## Views of customers and/or partners

After each session of activity an evaluation is undertaken with each of the delegates. This is then followed up by way of a visit from a member of the Business support team, who obtains further views from the beneficiary.

All beneficiaries are also provided with a direct line to the ABF with contact details if they wish to provide any additional comments/views, positive or otherwise.

These comments are then feedback, logged and impacted on future workshop delivery.

## Comparison of how the project dealt with Information Communication Technologies, Equal Opportunities and Sustainability

### **ICT**

Learndirect being one of the partners of the project have helped in facilitating the following:

- Via mobile facilities, using laptops encourage learning via ICT in the workplace
- To develop an online basic skills presence on the ABF website
- To e-mail learning material
- To utilise ICT software packages in gathering and evaluating feedback.
- To publish good practice report on the Web for other organisations to download

ICT has thus contributed to both widening participation and achievement levels.

### **Equal Opportunities**

The Equal Opportunities policy of the Asian Business federation is based on ELTEC's Equal Opportunities Framework for Action. Through the provision of a specialist and dedicated resource, ABF are able to ensure that equality issues impact upon every facet of the ABF. All members of staff are issued with an Equal Opportunities policy in order to ensure that they understand the process of raising their concerns. Additionally the staff handbook clearly states ABF's equal opportunities policy.

As a result we have Provided the following to the Project:

- Ensuring all guidance and publicity materials display a commitment to equal opportunities, and are reviewed to ensure that they are free from gender, age or ethnic stereotyping.
- Ensuring that appropriate support is made available to overcome barriers to access and success.
- Providing staff training and development in equal opportunities policy and practice.

The ABF EO policy has a particular focus on inclusion for all regardless of gender, race, and age. The ABF also have a target on the number of Non Asian members as part of their overall membership target, which has been set by the board. This is to promote the concept of inclusion and integration for all.

## Sustainability of the Project's Activities (Exit Strategy/Mainstreaming)

Sustainability is vital to this project. The project partners have accepted that the implementation of more collaborative working will benefit the Northwest region in the long term. Sustainable partnerships require a long-term investment in both human capital and programme priorities for partners

The design of the project represents a very significant contribution to ensuring that there is lasting impact on the ability of a range of sector to address changing skill needs. It does so by:

- Being stakeholder-driven. Partnerships with large and small employers show the proposal is in itself recognition by workforce and employers of the need to buy into training solutions for competitiveness and employability.
- Building up a research bank that will inform. The development of a new system of life long learning and skills accreditation. This will further develop the multi-skilled workforce as required in the Task Force Report.
- The synergy between workplace learning and local learning centres develops a model for Ufi provision for a sector where special problems of workforce mobility require this solution.

The project thus supports the development of training policies for a range of sectors, putting these into effect by collaboration between companies and the partners, and setting up a network for achieving the continuous improvement sought in the DETR report and sustainability beyond the period of ESF funding. We will also work with mainstream support agencies for them to learn from the best practice developed by this project and although we will continue to fund this project through their core funding, the scale of the programme will be much reduced as a result of the cost implications

## Details of tools used to evaluate the impact of the project

The WFD Manager and the ABF Chief Executive were responsible for managing the monitoring of outputs and impact through well established systems based on

- Weekly reports which are accumulated into monthly then quarterly reports. This system allows variance trends to be observed before they become significant. The Project Manager will be responsible for briefing all project personnel in the use of the system.
- Monitoring of impact will be achieved through management of milestone achievement, the management of Steering Group and User Group meeting and by quarterly review.
- Records of the system will be maintained by the project business support staff and will be easily accessible for the purposes of audit. This has been shown in the recent LSC audit where all required paperwork/documentation was available and in correct order.

Management of expenditure and delivery of activity will be monitored by the ABF Chief Executive, this will be reported to the steering group on a 6 weekly basis in order for them to ensure that the project is being delivered effectively. Both expenditure and activity will be monitored against predetermined profiles.

## Additional Information

The target group for this project has been:

- The minority ethnic employees
- Unskilled/low skilled workers with basic skills needs
- Non learners in low skilled work places
- People for whom English is a second language
- People with literacy and numeracy problems
- All occupations & all sectors

The added value of this project is that this is the first time that an outreach element towards meeting the basic skills needs of minority ethnic businesses has been met via an organisation that is being led by the private sector minority ethnic business representatives.. The ABF are constantly being asked for assistance by government agencies around this area of work. By receiving further funding we will be in a position to extend our current provision and thus provide increased additionality to our core activities. Without this funding from the LSC, continuing this project in the same manner would not be viable.

SIGNATURE:

DATE