



## **Support for Provider Development in the North West**

The North West region has secured a significant budget for provider and other stakeholder development targeted at improving employer engagement. Funding is available to build the capacity and capability of key stakeholders, partnerships and networks to work more effectively with employers.

Recent work the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has undertaken, involving a number of stakeholders, including provider and broker organisations, has identified some potential development activities which can now be accessed via grant funding through the LSC.

The proposed development activities can be supported by Ashridge Consultants who have facilitated a review of development issues in the region and have undertaken similar development programmes both nationally and with North West providers.

Grant funding is available to providers and stakeholders to support the following activities and can also be considered for other development activities in response to clear proposals which demonstrate capacity building linked to Train to Gain and employer engagement.

### **Proposed development activities:-**

#### **A) Strengthening existing provider partnerships and relationships**

The LSC is keen to offer consultancy support to improve the performance of Train to Gain partnerships and networks, building on existing networking arrangements in place across much of the region, primarily but not exclusively at sub-regional level. The level of support available to interested partnerships/networks will vary according to their development needs and the complexity of the activity to be delivered.

Consultancy support can be used to help partners in a network/partnership to identify current objectives, performance, strengths and areas for development. The issues to be tackled could be either strategic or operational or a combination of both. Examples of potential areas of joint working across partnerships/networks include strategic planning and marketing to access new employer markets, or working at a more operational level to identify how value can be added to existing systems and infrastructure.

The offer can also be extended to individual providers requiring assistance in developing their partnerships and relationships with other providers.

We would expect the consultancy support to be used to take the partnerships/networks through a number of key phases:

- Initial consultancy including one to one interviews with partnership/network members as a key part of the initial diagnostic work.
- Bringing the partners together to build on the initial interviews and further develop the diagnostic process. This will include the agreement of a high impact action plan to be undertaken by the partnership as a whole and by individual members and will identify the areas in which consultancy support will be focused for the time available. Action plans can be discussed with the LSC for comment and suggestions.
- Continuing consultancy support to each partnership to support implementation of the action plan.
- Consultancy support for the partnership/network to undertake a final evaluation of implementation process and to identify further developments required in the future.
- During the course of the activity, key themes of work, as well how the partners implemented their action plan should be identified to form the basis of a report which will be made available to all the key stakeholders in the region and nationally.

## **B) Delivering whole organisational change to providers**

Whole organization development consultancy is available to providers to work towards:

- Meeting North West provider business development needs
- Increasing Train to Gain performance
- Increasing levels of full cost recovery work with employers
- Increasing organisational business impact
- Supporting future achievement of the New Standard
- Improving the transfer of good practice across the region
- Creating models of business sustainability

The offer will take the form of an investment in intensive on-site support available on application for

1. Providers who are already performing well
2. Providers who are underperforming but have the capacity to improve significantly
3. Providers with clear development needs

Support will therefore be accessible to providers at different stages of the development journey and represents a significant investment in enhancing performance. The actual extent of support available to individual organisation will vary based on development need but will be bespoke to that organisation

Initially each organisation will use of a set of diagnostic tools to assess the provider's current position across a range of key employer responsiveness areas, such as performance in:

- Creating responsive leadership and management
- Developing responsiveness vision, strategy and perspectives
- Building effective business and growth plans
- Driving forward marketing and branding activities
- Improving delivery processes to employers
- Establishing dynamic cultures and relationships
- Enhancing staff capabilities, rewards and flexibility
- Generating high performance and quality
- Working collaboratively with other providers
- Making best use of brokerage support

The diagnostic tools will also map against the New Standard and will assist providers in checking their readiness to meet its requirements. The diagnostic process will take a "horizontal" and "vertical" approach and will need to involve key functional and cross functional teams within the provider organisation, in particular:

- Senior management
- Employer engagement and or business development teams
- Delivery/operational teams

It will be a condition of engagement in this consultancy activity that the provider makes a clear commitment to ensure their full involvement, including at the most senior level.

The diagnostic phase will conclude with the creation of an impact agenda with the provider. This will identify key short, medium and long term actions that will need to be addressed if the provider is to improve its employer responsiveness and business performance. The consultants and provider will agree priority issues to be addressed during the remainder of the consultancy process. If the provider is able to fully engage with this process as outlined above we would envisage the organisation to have completed an individual impact agenda within 6 to 8 weeks.

The consultant(s) will work with the relevant teams in the provider organisation to address the priorities identified during the diagnostic phase and in the impact agenda. Other specific expertise will be available for the provider to access if required. The consultant(s) will also signpost the provider to assist in meeting other needs.

The consultancy team will address wide strategic, organisational change issues through to specific operational and tactical skills and will tailor resources to demand. The impact of the consultancy process is captured, evaluated and reported to both the provider and the LSC. Consultancy support will include the production of a short case study for future development and marketing purposes.

### **C) Providing targeted interventions for a wider group of providers**

In addition to the above whole organisation approach, which can only support a limited number of providers, there is access to specific, targeted support to address identified strategic or operational issues. Proposals to use the fund will be considered on a case by case basis.

### **D) Strengthening relations between brokers, key stakeholders and providers**

Consultancy support focussed on improving the working relationships between brokers, key stakeholders and providers. Initial work may include a review involving the Skills Brokerage service and other stakeholders of the development and impact of the existing and emerging relationships between stakeholders. This review will inform a range of proposals for sharing with the wider provider community particularly identifying opportunities where value can be added.

This approach will allow emerging arrangements to embed and inform future relationship building activities which are expected to follow.

Follow-up activity could include action learning methodologies which have been implemented successfully in other regions. Supporting development of an effective broker-provider action learning process (that builds on previous work) may be beneficial and help raise performance. It can also support the improvement of Skills Brokerage activities for both Skills Brokers and providers (in particular for provider staff in employer engagement type roles). The use of an action learning methodology is proposed to enable participants to use the group's help in identifying, defining and analyzing key processes and relationships.

### **Next Steps**

The above options for development support are available in the North West region in addition to the national programme of support provided by QIA/LSN.

Through regional funding we want to encourage a greater numbers of providers and other stakeholders to access a broad range of support which will enhance employer engagement and support the ambitious growth targets for Train to Gain.

NW Support for Provider development 07/08

Applications for support/further information should be made in the first instance to:

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Contact - [Clive.duguid@lsc.gov.uk](mailto:Clive.duguid@lsc.gov.uk)

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