

Important information on changes to the provider registration process by the Skills Funding Agency

ACTOR: the Approved College and Training Organisation Register Streamlined procurement of provision

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In order to simplify the existing procurement arrangements the Skills Funding Agency is introducing an *Approved College and Training Organisation Register* (ACTOR) to replace the current Qualified Provider Framework (QPF). The current two stage process requires an invitation to tender (ITT) stage to those organisations that have successfully made it onto the QPF. This means additional time is spent responding to individual tenders, which then have to be assessed by Agency staff. ACTOR will simplify this arrangement as it will be a single stage process with fewer questions, which will all be closed, multiple-choice questions that would have been part of the ITT stage. This means that organisations will have a more streamlined process to go through in order to be considered for funding and that, once colleges and training organisations are registered on ACTOR, they can be considered for new contracted provision without the need for individual tenders.

No organisation should be disadvantaged by this change. All providers that are registered on the QPF on 10 September 2010 will be automatically migrated onto ACTOR. In order to be registered on ACTOR organisations are required to update their pre-qualifying information annually. Therefore, in order to maintain their registration, organisations must have refreshed their information on the QPF at any time on or after 11 September 2009. New providers and those whose application for inclusion on the QPF has been unsuccessful can apply for registration on ACTOR as soon as it is launched.

Our intention is that ACTOR will be the single process through which colleges and training organisations can be considered for funding from the Skills Funding Agency. Therefore, from October 2010, all colleges and training organisations will need to be registered on ACTOR in order to be considered for future participation funding¹ from the Skills Funding Agency. This includes those training organisations that currently hold contracts with the Skills Funding Agency but which are not registered on the QPF.

Once approved under ACTOR, providers will remain on the register providing they refresh their information when asked to do so and continue to meet the entry threshold.

¹ This includes Adult Learner Responsive, Employer Responsive, Programmes for the Unemployed, Adult Safeguarded Learning, and ESF co-financed programmes.

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Providers with Skills Funding Agency contracts will be subject to performance management under the new FE Quality Assurance System. Those falling below minimum levels of performance or where Framework for Excellence and/or Ofsted findings trigger concerns, and who fail to respond to opportunities to improve, may be removed from ACTOR. Contracted providers will also be asked to update their entry on the new Next Step adult careers service course directory in order to remain on the register.

What do I need to do?

Providers who have been told that they were successfully registered on the QPF and have refreshed their pre-qualifying documents via the Skills Funding Agency's e-tendering portal since 11 September 2009 need do nothing until after ACTOR goes live during October 2010.

Providers who hold contracts with the Skills Funding Agency but have never been registered on the QPF need do nothing until after ACTOR goes live during October 2010.

Providers currently successfully registered on the QPF that have not refreshed their pre-qualifying documents via the Skills Funding Agency's e-tendering portal since 11 September 2009 should do so before 10 September 2010. If these providers do not refresh their details, then they cannot be automatically migrated across to ACTOR and will then have to complete the full ACTOR application.

Once ACTOR is available, **all providers** migrated to ACTOR will be expected to enter ACTOR before 31 December 2010 and respond to questions regarding the programmes and provision for which they wish to be considered for funding.

Organisations that have previously been unsuccessful in their application for registration on the QPF should wait until the launch of ACTOR in October 2010. At this time they will have the opportunity to respond to the new questionnaires covering the areas in which they wish to be considered for funding. When answering these questions they should ensure that they pay attention to the details supplied in their debrief note explaining why they previously failed.

Organisations that have previously never sought funding from the Skills Funding Agency should wait until ACTOR is launched in October 2010. At this time they will have the opportunity to respond to the new questionnaires covering the areas in which they wish to be considered for funding.

Further information

Further information on ACTOR will be published on the Skills Funding Agency's website in September and when the tool is launched in October. This information will include details of where ACTOR can be found as well as instructions on accessing the tool.

Future Developments

This note describes the arrangements for the initial launch of ACTOR in autumn 2010. However, we are also looking at how we might develop ACTOR for future years as part of the funding simplification consultation this summer