

The Agency's New Register of Training Organisations

Following an extensive review and evaluation of the Approved College and Training Organisations Register (ACTOR) during 2011, a new register will be launched today (18 January 2011). It is called the Register of Training Organisations.

The Agency would like to thank the Sector and the Department for Business Innovation and Skills for their extensive contribution and support in undertaking this review. Particular thanks to representatives from AELP, AOC, LSIS and the 157 Group who have been actively engaged in the process and will continue to be part of the ongoing review of the Register.

All organisations that wish to be considered for funding to deliver Education and Vocational Training Services, including European Social Funding and Apprenticeships will need to complete the Due Diligence Gateway Assurance process, or the Assurance Gateway for short. The exemption extended to some providers last year **will not** operate in 2012/13, which means that some will need to complete the Assurance Gateway for the first time.

All organisations will need to pass the Assurance Gateway in order to be eligible to: (i) tender for future funds through Invitations to Tender (ITTs) that will be announced; and (ii) to receive growth funding that becomes available through the Agency's quarterly and end-of-year performance management processes. If an established provider fails to pass the Gateway, the Agency will consider its intention to allocate an Adult Skills Budget for August 2012.

During the evaluation of ACTOR, a number of training organisations highlighted that the Gateway sought some information that was already collected by the Agency. Whilst we do want to eradicate the need for information being sought more than once, not all the information required for Assurance Gateway is held by the Agency and so full completion is required.

However as part of Agency's programme to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, we are reviewing with sector representatives and the Department for Business Innovation and Skills the extent of all the returns providers are required to make. We anticipate that this review will result in recommendations to dismantle some aspects of the current regulatory framework and will lead to a reduction in the number of returns. We also anticipate that the new Register of Training Organisations will become the main vehicle for collecting and storing all information.

The Register of Training Organisations – Our Approach

In designing the new Register of Training Organisations, and the processes associated with it, we have sought to:

- establish a single register of all the training organisations that deliver, or wish to deliver, education and training on behalf of the Agency;
- establish a process whereby the Agency receives and holds sufficient assurance that organisations are appropriate and can meet the Agency's requirements;
- make a clear distinction between the Due Diligence Assurance Gateway process and the invitation to tender process, so that information is only requested once;
- require subcontractors that hold a contract, or contracts with prime-contractors that total in excess of £500,000 to complete the Assurance Gateway; and
- streamline the communications via the e-tendering portal

This new **Assurance Gateway** comprises around 80% fewer questions than before and therefore a reduction in the amount of time we expect will be required to complete. The questions seek information in relation to organisation details, type of organisation, compliance, financial strength and technical capability. The new process means that this information will not be sought again if an organisation decides to respond to an invitation to tender.

Whilst training organisations will need to refresh the Due Diligence Assurance Gateway questionnaire each year, the requirement will be to update and not re-populate the questionnaire, unless significant changes in their circumstances occur which warrant a complete re-submission. The Agency has been able to pre-populate for some providers some areas of the Gateway.

The Due Diligence Gateway Assurance process and Subcontractors

In order to strengthen our oversight and management of the wider training provider organisation network, there is a new requirement that subcontractors of Agency training organisations, with an aggregate contract value of £500,000 or more, also successfully pass the Due Diligence Gateway Assurance process. This does not remove or reduce the responsibilities or due diligence processes exercised by prime training organisations when selecting or managing their subcontractors. If a subcontractor fails to pass the Due Diligence Assurance Gateway process, we will review and then alert prime contractors. Prime contractors may continue to contract with the subcontractor, but such failure would signal the need for additional checks

and a higher level of diligence, monitoring and review on the part of the prime contractor.

In line with our commitment to simplification and transparency, the Agency will also publish a list of Subcontractors with an aggregate value of £100,000 and over. The information published will be based on declarations made prime providers that contract directly with the Agency.

Timeline for completion

Launch date	18 January 2012 (5pm)
Submit financial statement by	10 February 2012
Submit online questionnaire by	17 February 2012
Feedback from the Agency	30 March 2012
Register published	2 April 2012

Any queries please contact info@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk.