

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

Introduction

I am delighted to introduce Options 2's Employer Engagement Strategic Plan. This plan focuses on the priorities we believe will help us deliver our vision 'to be the quality training provider of choice for employers and learners'.

We understand that in order to remain competitive in this ever changing economy, it is essential we engage with employers. We work cohesively with employers to ensure people within the economy or entering the economy have the skills, attitude, experience and motivation that employers need.

Employers are increasingly being encouraged to engage with initiatives as part of government reforms.

We understand there still remains a lot of confusion out there in respect of jargon and numerous options and changing names of programmes. In this document we aim to provide a clear understanding of what is available in the marketplace.

Jayne Wise
Managing Director

"To be competitive in a global economy, the UK needs to have a world-class workforce that matches the US and Japan and can compete with the growing challenges from China and India. Since we can't hope to match emerging economies on labour costs, it becomes all the more important to invest in our most important resource, which is the human capital in every individual"

Richard Lambert, Director General, CBI

Shaping up for the future: The business vision for education and skills

The Business Development Team

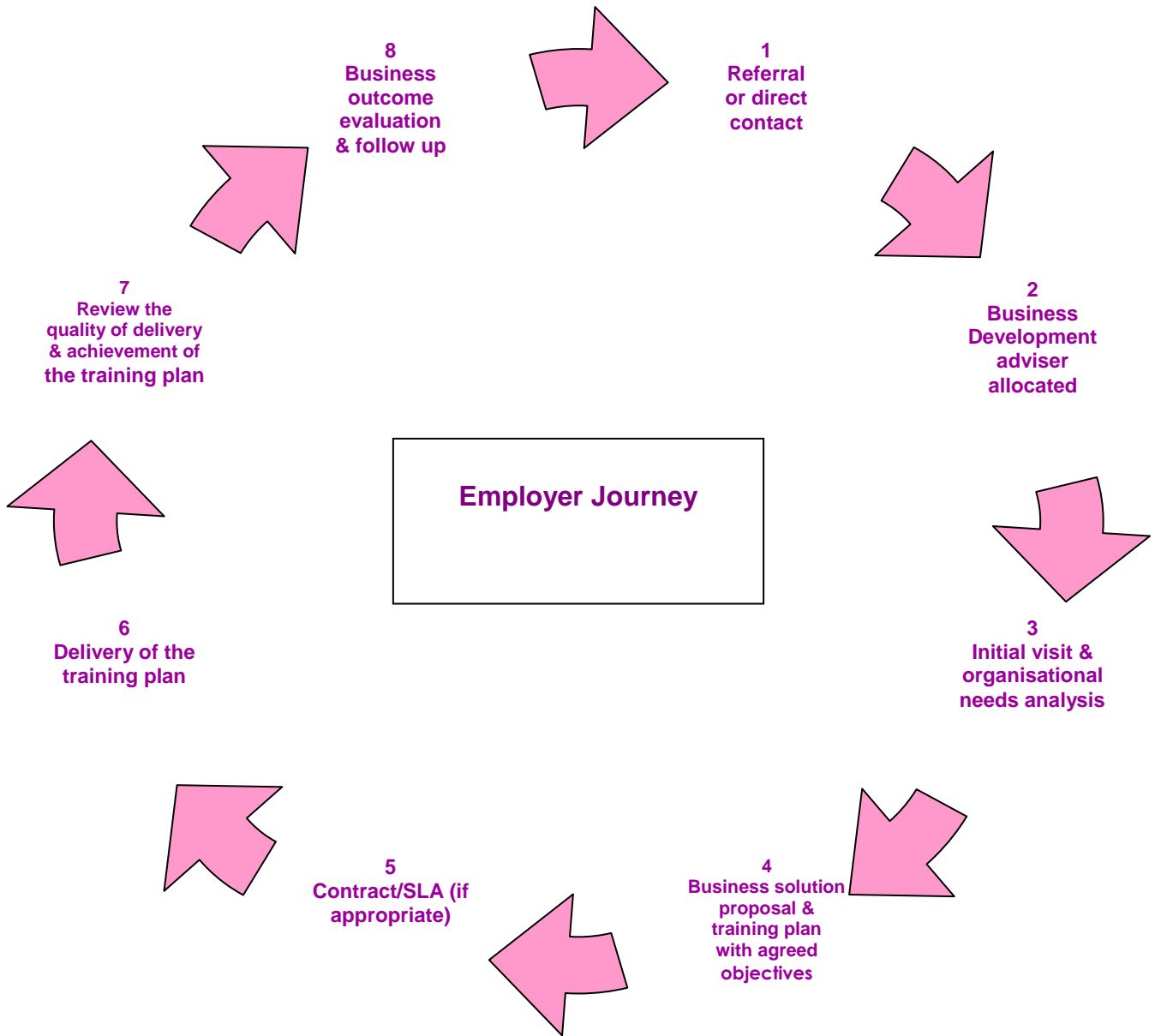
We have a small number of business development advisers (BDA) who also carry out additional tasks within the organisation. As the business continues to grow we will expand and develop this team. We offer programmes from entry to employment to NVQs in advice and guidance, supporting teaching and learning in schools amongst others. The BDAs are based at our site in Horton, Northamptonshire. Our organisation was established in 2005 to provide workbased learning and that is our area of strength.

We offer off the shelf training programmes but equally deliver many bespoke ones. When requested we have modified existing programmes to fit with a particular employer's requirement. We are often approached by employers to help them solve a business problem through training, some of which is non-accredited and on many occasions is focussed on employability skills.

'Key' factors of the Options 2 team

- A subject specialist delivery team
- Tutors and assessors who work on an associate basis, enabling us to offer their services 24/7, also resulting in lower overheads for Options 2 of which the benefits can be passed on to employers
- Training programmes and qualifications which are current and fit for purpose, back by credible awarding bodies
- Employers have their own dedicated BDA, with a personal visit from the BDA upon initial contact and ongoing throughout the life of the relationship
- Fast response times to enquiries
- Referral to other 'quality' providers if we are unable to help
- Funded programmes for Ttg, apprenticeships etc. providing eligibility criteria is met
- Completion of an organisational needs analysis (ONA) to determine your requirements at the outset and reviewed/updated ongoing
- Completion of an individual training plan for each team member
- Competitively priced training packages either off the shelf or bespoke which can incorporate employers own in-house training already being delivered
- Information, advice and guidance for all people on programme with us
- Inclusion in learner reviews and regular updates on their progress
- Programmes delivered in the workplace at a time and location convenient for the business
- Opportunity to share your views on us and our service
- Links to other useful organisations

The employer journey demonstrates the sequence of events which takes place when engaging with employers.



How do we engage with employers?

Training for employers	Work experience	Sector links
<p>We are able to access funding through the Skills Funding Agency, European Social Fund and through our network of partnership agreements.</p> <p>We also engage with employers on a commercial basis.</p> <p>We are able to provide training through the following sectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills for Life • ESOL • Business Administration • ITQ • Information, advice & guidance • Learning & Development • Health & Social Care • Supporting Teaching & Learning in Schools • Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector • A1 (assessor award) • V1 (verifier award) • Employability award <p>In addition we deliver employability programmes, here are few examples e.g. Equality & Diversity, Communication in the Workplace & Presentation Skills many certificated by N.C.F.E and City and Guilds</p>	<p>Excellent links with local employers have been built, many of these employers offering work experience and tasters for some of our contracts.</p>	<p>Employers are invited to give talks to our team and learners on specific sectors.</p> <p>Employers are invited in to our organisation to see first hand what we do.</p> <p>We encourage employers to talk to each other to share their experience of work with us.</p>

What input did employers and other stakeholders have in developing our strategy?

In drawing up this strategy we used a number of sources of information:

- Sector Skills Councils
- National Skills Academies
- Input directly from businesses
- Skills Funding Agency

- Economic intelligence from National employers skills survey 2009, ~Sector Skills Alliance, CBI, East Midlands Development Agency, Northampton observatory
- Chamber of commerce
- Jobcentre Plus

As a result of employer surveys and reports a number of priorities have emerged for the East of England.

- Ageing population is projected to be a significant issue
- Healthcare is expected to be the fastest growing sector
- Management and leaderships skills are a growing requirement across the region
- Forecasts suggest the food and drink sector will experience growth in output and employment.
- 8% of the East Midlands workforce has no qualifications.
- Leadership and management skills are thought to be the skills in most need of improvement.
- Low carbon technologies and other new technologies provide opportunities to exploit local and regional advantages and generate new skills demands.
- Generic, employability and basic skills are more likely to be flagged as skills gaps by employers.
- Demand is increasing for the highest skills jobs but there will be a continued requirement for low skilled employment.

There are some 'key sectors' which have been highlighted within the region:

- **Skills for manufacturing:** there is a notable lack of relevant FE capacity for courses that support manufacturing, especially for young people. Skills development in this area should be in conjunction with employers and learning should reflect employer need. Providers should collaborate with large, high value manufacturing employers, such as Rolls Royce, Toyota etc. who have already developed successful training infrastructures and invest heavily in R&D. Their supply chains provide a market for new course content delivery based on courses developed collaboratively.
- **Skills for Construction:** Low carbon technologies will require new skills in existing jobs. Providers will need to update course content to reflect emerging 'green skills'. Providers need to work collaboratively with power generation and waste recycling companies in the region, who are pioneering low carbon, resource efficient technologies. Providers capacity in Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire will need to meet increased demand for jobs in construction due to population growth and increases in house building as the economy recovers.
- **Skills for Health and Bioscience:** The growth and diversification of the sector will require the provision of Skills for Life and qualifications at Level 2 and Level 3, especially for care assistants. There is a need for further 'progression routes for the unemployed' from Skills for Life towards more specific health-care related provision. This is because low skilled jobs in health-care provide entry-level opportunities for the long-term unemployed and young people who are in the NEET group. Analysis suggests that people in these groups may lack the required skills to be able to fill such jobs. There is a need for more bespoke provision for work-based learning to support supervisors and managers across this sector. Employers have identified skills gaps in management and leadership. Also staff moving from the NHS to a private service provider will need to develop entrepreneurial skills to adapt to working in a competitive business environment.
- **Apprenticeships:** IAG provision will need to strengthen its advocacy of apprenticeships. Needs to be a focus on Level 3 and 4 qualifications to meet current and forecast demand for technician level jobs.
-

- **Flexible skills for a changing labour market:** In an increasing learner-driven skills system, it is important that employability skills are embedded across all provision for young people
- **Union Learning Representatives:** Key contacts within industry in order to develop programmes of learning for employers.

East Midlands Skills Priorities statement Academic Year: 2011 - 2012

We are keen to expand our provision, especially into the Apprenticeships area as we see this is as 'key' to the sustainability of our organisation.

Sector Skills Councils and National Skills Academies

Sector Skills Councils are independent, employer led, UK-wide organisations designed to build a skills system that is driven by employer demand. There are currently 25 SSCs covering over 90% of the economy. They work with the following four key goals:

- Reduce skills gaps and shortages
- Improve productivity, business and public service performance
- Increase opportunities to boost the skills and productivity of everyone in the sector's workforce
- Improve learning supply through National Occupational Standards, apprenticeships and further and higher education

National Skills Academies are employer led centres of training excellence. The government's mission is to create a world class workforce by delivering the skills that employers need in each sector of the economy. Skills academies take different shapes and forms, ranging from purpose-built training centres to online courses tailored to the needs of each sector. Crucially, skills academies are led by employers who work with government and training providers to shape the training and qualifications that will help them compete in global markets.

Working with the SSC's and NSA is a key developmental area for Options 2.

Priority one: Learners

Objectives	Success measures	Actions	Timescale
Continue to improve success rates.	Success rates across all programmes to exceed 75%	Assessment visits & reviews utilised to drive performance	Learners to be visited every 2 weeks and reviews to take place 1/4ly based on average length of stay on programme
Build on the current satisfaction levels of learners	90% of learners to rate our delivery of training as good or above	Each learner to complete a survey whilst still 'in learning'.	First survey to be undertaken after one month on programme and the final one to be undertaken one month prior to the end of the programme
All learner to be offered the opportunity to enrol onto a Skills for Life programme (funding dependant)	60% of eligible people to take up the offer of Skills for life programmes	IAG to be delivered prior to every programme	Skill scans to be undertaken prior to enrolment

Objectives	Success measures	Actions	Timescale
Increase the enrolment of learners	Deliver training in 250 companies during 10/11	BDA to use innovative methods to engage employers and learners, including increased delivery 24/7	Sept 10 – Aug 11

Priority two: Employers

Objectives	Success measures	Actions	Timescale
Build new relationships directly with employers & engage with them to influence programme development	3 new relationships developed with 'key' employers in the region e.g. Rolls Royce	BDA to identify key employers & set up meetings	Dec 10
		BDA to set up working group/employer forum to develop programmes in conjunction with employers	Dec 10
Engage with SSCs and develop a mutually beneficial working relationship	Engagement with the following SSC: e-skills UK, Improve Ltd, Lifelong Learning UK, Propskills UK, Skills for care & development, Skills for Health	BDA to be allocated specific SSC & contact them to ascertain how you can work together	Sept 10 – Aug 11
Gain membership with specific National Skills Academies identified in regional objectives	Membership with the following: Manufacturing, Food & Drink Manufacturing, IT & construction.	BDA to be allocated specific NSA & contact them to ascertain how you can work together. Quality adviser to support the application for membership	Sept 10 – Aug 11
Raise employer satisfaction results	90% of employers to state our service is good or above.	Surveys to be sent to employers twice per year	Sept 10 – Aug 11
Communication with employers	Publish the following documents on the website: employer engagement strategy, employer journey & employer charter. Develop employer forums	Managing director to engage the web company to upload documents	Oct 10
		BDA to engage with employers & stakeholders to diaries forums & allocate subjects	Nov 10

Priority three: General

Objectives	Success measures	Actions	Timescale
Communication with employers	Publish the following documents on the website: employer engagement strategy, employer journey & employer charter.	Managing director to engage the web company to upload documents	Oct 10
	Develop employer forums	BDA to engage with employers & stakeholders to diaries forums & allocate subjects	Nov 10
Links to be made with trade union representatives	To be working with at least 1 trade union representative	BDA to contact 3 organisations to be targeted who employ trade union reps	April 11
Employers to give talks to people on our books via our recruitment arm	1 talk to be delivered every 2 months	BDA to arrange suitable employers to give talks and diarise	Commencing Nov 10
Objectives	Success measures	Actions	Timescale
Develop the NVQ arm of the business into priority areas in response to regional requirements	New qualifications on offer in: manufacturing, care, management, sales & marketing.	NVQ project manager to gain approval for new qualifications	Aug 11
		BDA to utilise new relationships with SSCs and NSA to increase delivery into these areas	Mar 11
Secure a contract to deliver Apprenticeships directly	Contract awarded	Managing director to bid for appropriate contracts	Jun 11
Ensure provision is keeping pace with market developments	Prospectus accurately reflects market requirements	Prospectus to be reviewed 1/4ly & updated accordingly	1/4ly from Sept 10
BDAs to embark on an NVQ in sales and marketing	Achievement of qualifications	Enrolment onto qualifications	Aug 11
To ensure all facilities are fit for purpose and up to date	90% of learners to state our facilities are good or above	Asset register to be updated annually by the office manager	Oct 10
		Options 2 locations to be reviewed monthly and resources checked by location manager	Monthly

Objectives	Success measures	Actions	Timescale
Diversify into additional revenue streams	Bid for 100% of 'applicable' funding opportunities available to support employer engagement and response to redundancy	Managing director to identify all potential funding opportunities	Sept 10 – Aug 11
		BDA to market new opportunities	Sept 10 – Aug 11
		NVQ project manager to gain relevant awarding body approval	Sept 10 – Aug 11
To achieve TQS Part A	Successful accreditation of TQS Part A	TQS team to work towards the qualification	March 11

Reviewing and developing the strategy

In the early stages of setting up Options 2 we knew we needed to be forward thinking and have the ability to respond to change immediately, starting off as a small organisation has enabled us to embed this thought process into the business and it is now the norm.

The cycle we follow for our strategy is planning, reviewing and adapting.

We plan by:

- Looking at the regional & local requirements
- Looking at the governments objectives/plans/agreements
- Understanding employers requirements
- Understanding learners requirements
- Ensuring our plan is realistically deliverable
- Analysing our internal organisational structure & skill set
- Analysing our facilities & equipment
- Looking at the financial impact

We review by:

- Feedback from employers, learners, stakeholders & our own team
- External audits against quality standards i.e. SFA, ESF, Matrix
- Keeping abreast of local labour market information
- Keeping abreast of emerging government trends & policies

We adapt (based on the findings above) by:

- Making necessary changes to the organisation
- Making the necessary changes to our delivery
- Reviewing our strategy each quarter alongside the business plan & marketing plan
- Employing the right people with a forward thinking mindset and the ability to adapt