

Third Sector Skills Strategy Consultation

How to respond.

This consultation will take place between December 2008 and March 2009.

Please answer those questions you feel able to, do not feel you need to answer them all. There is a space for any additional comments at the end of the form.

All responses should be sent to

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The closing date is 27th February 2009

There will be a number of consultation events across the UK, if you are interested in hosting one of these, or you wish to find out more about an event near you please go to the website address above.

If you have any questions on the consultation please contact mark.freeman@ukworkforcehub.org.uk

Many thanks for your time in completing this questionnaire

Contact details

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Organisation

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Check box **if you wish your response to be private**

Your contact details and comments may be made public and used in future publications unless you expressly state you do not wish this.

All Questions refer to the consultation document chapters.

Introduction

Question 1: We listed seven sector specific skills areas, have we have missed any that we should ensure that we include in subsequent versions of the strategy?

Three additional areas

1. Project Management Skills - engagement with procurement processes, strategic planning, people management and other skills like health and safety
2. Employment and Charity Law
3. Resources management - reducing waste, better use of resources, greening workplaces
4. Also there is a need for their to be good signposting to the existing Sector Skills Councils where there are currently many skills and career pathways mapped and accredited courses developed which would apply to people working in the sector. For some there would be a cross over between the New Skills Body and other SSCs work, so they need to be able to dovetail programmes of work together. There also needs to be links in with areas like ESOL provision, and Life Skills (IT, Literacy and Numeracy programmes)

Key findings from the report on skills demand

Question: This report is based on a number of pieces of research carried out by the Hub, do the findings represent how you see the sector, and if not what are the principle differences?

Yes

Question: **Soft skills** are seen as a particular area in which the sector needs to build additional competency, do you agree with this and if so what do you think are the best ways to develop these skills?

Soft skills - need accreditation and benchmarking against criteria/assessment – Unite is currently working on such accreditation elsewhere where they are negotiating with employers and accrediting bodies to have non-accredited competences such as, “Establish and maintain working relationships with others”, accredited. “Soft” skills should be equally as valued as any others, if not more in the Third Sector. People should be able to access accreditation from right across the sector, and be able to add this to their portfolio of skills.

Question: **Leadership and management** is also an important area. What training do you do in this area and are there specific things we need to do to ensure that those in the sector can build skills in this area?

Leadership and Management - Need better understanding of HR, how to engage employees in organisations (i.e. working with unions) to understand workforce issues - e.g. pressure felt by staff, stress and dignity at work issues, the impact that this has on organisation and individuals and how they can be addressed. This issue is particularly acute in the sector. There is a disproportionate number of employment tribunals that arise from the sector, which is an indication of poor people management skills. Before work is carried out in developing a skills strategy in this

area, it is essential that the New Skills Body sits down with the trade unions to help identify some of the deficits in this area.

Key findings from report on skills supply

Question: Looking at the list of accredited training have we missed any?

N/A

Question: Do you use any of these courses?

N/A

Question: Do you agree with general comments made in the document regarding the barriers to offering skills training, what other barriers are there

Yes - in particular lack of funding and therefore time, however also there is a lack of leadership in the skills area, so it is de-prioritised. Also organisations receiving short term funding (i.e. 3 years or less) cannot identify training a member of staff who is only with them for this short period of time as a priority. Creative work of the new skills body should be able to make opportunities more accessible, i.e. through on-line training and bite size training opportunities. Flexibility is necessary to meet the need of the employees and employers.

Question: How do you think we can work with employers and employees to raise the demand for training?

Firstly there need to be effective tools for self assessment and organisational assessment of an individuals learning needs. This work needs to be placed in the short term, medium and long terms strategy for someone's learning needs, and accompany career development and CPD aspirations to assist individuals to be stretched and organisations to develop their own employees. Secondly there must be a means of delivering training to all. Currently many organisations restrict who can access training. There is no reason why this should not be extended to the unpaid workforce, although Unite would argue that priority has to be given to the paid workforce.

Working with trade unions, who see learning as a major trade union issue is essential. Unions have trained 1000s of Union Learning Representatives, and ordinary Workplace Reps in the skills to support the learning agenda in workplaces. Unions have a role supporting organisations to communicate learning initiatives to the workforce, as well as assisting developing strategies with employers, including the development of joint agreements between Trade Unions and employers on guidelines for the training and development of employees. We also support individuals through their learning.

Finally there has to be leadership on learning issues. Internally within organisations there has to be positive promotion of learning opportunities, leadership means commitment, which means that time/resource has to be provided. Secondly there has to be external leadership from the New Skills Body, government as well as funders. Unite believes that there should be discussions with funders about ensuring that social clauses are developed and used in contracts, particularly with the public sector, to ensure that learning and development is a requirement of service providers.

Stakeholder analysis

Question: Are there any other key **national** stakeholders that we should add to the matrix. What would their starting positions be and where would their ideal final positions be?

Trade Unions are a key stakeholder in this agenda. They would be classified as high interest and mid to high influence with the aim of becoming high interest and high influence. Where Unite has a relationship with employers, we are able to work with employers on the learning and skills agenda in partnership with organisations. Jewish Care is an example where the work of the Unite Representative has had a major impact on the work of the organisation in relation to the skills agenda. Other organisations are discovering this role, and are drawing on the resources that unions can bring. Not only can we work at a senior level to develop learning strategies within workplaces, but also we can work with individuals to help them engage in the learning agenda and develop confidence in participation.

Question: Do you agree with the positions of the stakeholders as mapped above, if not what changes would you make?

Unite believe that employees have a greater interest in skills and would therefore move them. The reasons that it may be perceived that they have less interest is because they are all too aware of the barriers to learning, as already been highlighted in the paper. If personal benefit as well as organisational benefit and access to skills training can be demonstrated, as well as support provided, then interest will rise. CPD is often weak in the sector, and certainly in comparison to the public sector. Again a demonstration to a commitment to CPD will increase interest.

Question: do you have any ideas about how we can work with stakeholders to move them to their ideal positions?

As already identified, working with Union Learning Representatives, using appropriate skills analyses tools and time and other resources are key influences. In the NHS Unite was involved in a project around career pathways which linked closely to the concept of development of skills and in individuals opportunities at all levels within the profession. As a result of this, increased interest in skills occurred. Therefore linking skills development with career frameworks is essential. People 1st, for example have done some excellent work in this area. People need awareness of what development is available to them. It has got to be employee led, not just employer led.

Drivers

Question: What drivers have we missed (see annex 2 or www.3s4.org.uk for a comprehensive list, or add your own)?

Missed drivers include - threats of litigation - changes in law resulting from poor practice, safeguarding and the demands that need to be met around this agenda, particularly for organisations that work with vulnerable children and adults, and also employee morale is a major issue that impacts motivation. For instance colleagues who transfer from working with the NHS will know the provisions under the Knowledge and Skills Framework, and the lack of similar opportunities in the Third Sector. Procurement practices can have a major influence on the sector and social clauses must be explored with the New Skills Body.

Question: Do you agree with the confidence survey about the issues with regard to staff/volunteer recruitment, if not why not?

Yes

Scenarios

Question: Do you agree that the drivers listed in chapter 6 all fit in the high impact half of the grid, what other drivers should go here?

Yes - and issues raised previously - legal issues, safeguarding issues and workforce morale issues

Question: Of the drivers that you have listed as critical which are predictable and which are uncertain?

This is difficult to predict in the currently rapidly changing economic state that we are in.

Question: Do you agree with the statements about changes to the funding, policy, skills and charity worlds, if not why not and what would you add or takeaway?

Yes, definitely. More sustainable funding is essential (longer term contracts with the public sector can assist this). Longer funding periods provide greater stability for organisations and employees, helping the Sector through this time of uncertainty and instability. The Third Sector has to be adequately supported by funders and not just seen as a cheap alternative, therefore investment in the workforce is essential to see the desired social return.

Priorities for change

Question: Do you agree with the three priorities, if not why not?

Yes

Question: Regardless of whether you agree or not are there any changes or additions you would want to make?

Consideration needs to be given to some form of additional central funding to assist Third Sector Organisations who do not have the resource to develop their staff. It would be wrong if the New Skills Body did not address this issue. The mechanism for skills delivery is important, but also assistance may also be necessary. Some form of fund should be considered. Secondly it is essential to embed skills into the culture of the sector. The Third Sector, at one time, had a reputation as being a good provider of training. With the work of the New Skills Body, it is essential that this becomes a reality again.

Question: Are there any changes or additions you would make to the actions in priority 1?

Priority One - Action Four - All training should seek accreditation. It is often those that are the lowest down in organisation that benefit most from accreditation, and yet often undertake much informal training. All training however formal or informal, short or long term should seek ways of becoming accredited in a way that they can be passported in the sector, and beyond.

Priority One - Action Eight - It is important that there is good passporting and signposting between the Sector Skills Councils and the New Skills Body, and that the language, frameworks and tools developed talk well with the other councils.

Question: Are there any changes or additions you would make to the actions in priority 2?

Priority Two - Action 3 - Develop a strategic Approach for people to not only identify initial or immediate training needs but also to have a longer term direction for their development and learning, which can be flexible to be amended with time and changing circumstances.

Priority Two - Action 4 Develop a campaign for funders too.

Priority Two - New Action 6 - Work with Trade Unions, Union Learn and Union Learning Representatives to develop strategies and increase employee support and engagement.

Question: Are there any changes or additions you would make to the actions in priority 3?

Priority Three - Action One - Also look at ways of passporting skills from other sectors at this time of economic downturn to help recruit those facing redundancy - even as part of outplacement schemes to prevent redundancy and recruit to the sector. Offering a package of orientation to the sector, training and support could greatly reduce costs for state and organisations and enable organisations to recruit highly skilled individuals to both paid and voluntary roles. There may also be an opportunity to make these links with individuals who are moving onto short time.

Priority Three - Action Two - Also work closely with other Sector Skills Councils

Priority Three - Action Four - Ensure that the relationships with the other Sector Skills Councils will enable simple passporting of skills and integration with their programmes, for example for those who's interests cross between the New Skills Body and Skills for Care for example. The ability for transferability of skills recording through skills passports is important.

Non-accredited learning

Question: What are your views on non-accredited learning?

All learning should have access to accreditation.

Question: What are your views of the areas that need to be addressed; are there others that we have missed?

The New Skills Body should have clear signposting to relevant parts of other SSCs so organisations are not having to deal with a multiplicity of relationships/skills pledges. The main additional role that Unⁱte would want to see is that there is web-based co-ordinated information of all training in the sector, so that organisations can work closer together regarding provision. For example if a large charity is providing regional training on project management skills, then if this was advertised then a small local charity may also be able to access this, at a reduced cost and with the benefit of learning with others. If the web-based solution can promote courses geographically and by subject, this could save resource, build good relationships between organisations and bring many more benefits to the sector. The web tool could operate like Learn Direct on-line. The use of experiential learning through placements in the sector or outside the sector is also important.

Other comments

Use this box for any other comments

Thank you for your time