

## **Encouraging Employer Contribution to Workplace Language, Literacy Numeracy and ICT delivery**

### Case study – successful examples

This case study has been drawn from the experiences of three providers based in the South East, who were successful in obtaining employer funds to deliver workplace Literacy, Language and Numeracy programmes.

#### **Why the providers sought employer funding**

The reasons the providers wanted to encourage employers to fund workplace LLN delivery were:

- The provider wished to diversify their funding sources, in particular to move away from dependence on Learning and Skills Council core funding.
- The target group of employee learners were not eligible for LSC core funding
- The provider had been using project funds to deliver. These are not sustainable sources of funding, and the employer and the provider wanted to make the delivery sustainable.
- The provider was working with two employer groups- those that had accessed government funding to support delivery, and those that were new to workplace LLN, and had not received government funded provision. The providers wanted to offer a sustainable training product to both employer groups.

#### **How the providers developed programmes that employers would fund**

In order to develop workplace programmes that employers deemed worth funding, the providers all considered the following points:

- *Did the employer have sufficient funds to support the proposed learning programmes?*

In considering this, the providers carried out detailed costing analysis for their delivery. The providers also invested non funded staff development time to work with their employer partners to establish the answer to this question.

- *Which of the workplace activities did the employer consider worthy of investment in training?*

To establish this, the providers carried out Organisational Needs Analyses. The areas that employers were most likely to consider funding staff training for were;

- a. ICT training. Basic word processing skills and the use of Excel programme formulas were both funded by employers
- b. 'Compulsory' training- i.e. Health and Safety, training related to industry specific regulatory bodies or compulsory qualifications such as NVQ's.
- c. 'Soft' skills training. Employers viewed communication and team working skills as important enough to invest in. Other 'soft' skills employers funded were Customer Service courses and training in the use of staff appraisal processes.

Employers with staff not eligible for core funding also stated a need to offer all employees the same advantages and opportunities.

- *Which workplace activities were relevant to LLN skills?*

The providers identified two main areas to inform programme development

- a. Which workplace activities were seen as 'high impact' by the employer? Which activities were seen as core to the business success of the organisation?
- b. Which workplace activities were hospitable to LLN and ICT learning opportunities?

Once the providers were able to identify workplace skills and activities that were both 'high impact' to business needs and hospitable to LLN learning, relevant training and learning programmes were developed.

### **What types of courses did the employers fund?**

Employers were prepared to fund the following types of courses;

- Full or half day intensive training that related to a business imperative or statutory requirement
- Progression courses for employees that had already achieved an Entry Level 3 or Level 1 course. In these cases, employers were not prepared to 'embark on another full length course', but were prepared to fund shorter training/ learning that was structured around one or half day release.
- Employers were more prepared to fund learning that could be seen as training that was directly relevant to the job skills required.

Employers were also prepared to fund 'one off' training sessions that could be used to establish the level of staff interest in a particular area.

The providers noted that if staff demand was clear, many employers would agree to fund a programme.

### **Structure of the courses**

- All of the providers ultimately developed a range of short courses, competitively priced.
- The short courses could all be delivered as 'stand alone' sessions, deliverable in half or full days, that were relevant to the workplace skills or knowledge required. All the courses could also easily lead onto further training.
- The providers also developed a range of related longer courses of learning. These were relevant to the subject of the original short course, and mapped to the core relevant core curricula.

### **Challenges**

- Employers demanded high quality courses and training, however their quality criteria were very different to those of the ALL. E.g., mapping to the core curricula did not seem valid quality criteria for the employers, but relating the course to employee's daily workplace activities did.
- Despite employers funding the courses, there was still resistance from line managers to release staff for training. The providers had to invest additional time to develop relations with line managers, and to time table flexibly around core business activities.
- Many employers felt that they had effectively addressed any employee Skills for Life needs via delivery of a half or one day course.
- As the employer had funded the course, they some felt no compunction in pulling staff out of learning and back to work during the day.
- Most employers were interested in a Return on Investment measurement (ROI). Providers had to identify criteria for this, and establish appropriate measuring processes.

### **Successes**

- Providers were free to develop and deliver courses according to their expertise and the employer need. The providers enjoyed working outside of the requirements demanded by government funding regimes.
- The courses did offer employers a flexible approach to how they dealt with Skills for Life issued amongst their workforces.
- Some of the employers were keen to offer full Skills for Life training programme once the short course was completed.

- The courses gave providers a tool to get employers interested in Skills for Life issues, without requiring an employer commitment to a lengthy training programme.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

- Some employers are willing to pay for Skills for Life training, provided the LLN and ICT elements are seen as relevant to workplace activity.
- Providers need a detailed understanding of each workplaces activity in order to develop training that employers will fund. This understanding must include knowledge of which activities are seen as 'high value 'and 'high impact' by the employer, and which activities are hospitable to LLN or ICT learning.
- Perceived and actual success rates were improved when employees had the opportunity to practise their LLN and ICT skills as part of their usual workplace activities.
- Employer requirements for quality can differ greatly to those of Government funding bodies, and it is essential that this is considered by providers when developing workplace programmes.