

West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network

Sustainability Strategy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The WYLLN's Business Plan targeted the end of the first year of operation as the date for agreeing the Sustainability Strategy. At the last meeting of the Board, it was agreed that a sub-group would meet to address this issue.
- 1.2. Since then HEFCE's position has been made clearer: there will no additional funding of LLN's. However, following on from CHERI's evaluation of LLNs and their finding that all required a significant amount of start-up time, HEFCE have given LLN's the opportunity to extend their period of funded activity without any additional funding. This would require a revised business plan and targets to be submitted.

2. Outcomes of the meeting of the Sustainability Sub-group.

- 2.1. The purpose of the first meeting was to agree the success factors the partnership would be using to determine whether the WYLLN should continue. The group reaffirmed a commitment to the original aims as set out in the original business plan.
- 2.2. The major success factor would be the creation of a formalised progression map within West Yorkshire for vocational and work-based learners. They suggested that the infrastructure required to do this would include a learner tracking system and access to information on the map such as progression agreements and the support available.
- 2.3. Other benefits of continuing the WYLLN in some form would include
 - Providing a unified voice for HE in relation to strategic partners particularly with the employer engagement agenda.
 - Provide a collaborative structure to exploit opportunities that relate to WYLLN core mission
- 2.4. The group also brainstormed ideas on the opportunities to create income streams to sustain the central structures. However, it was agreed that a separate feasibility group may be needed to build a financial case.

3. Feedback from the Strategic Advisory Forum

- 3.1. Views were sought at the SAF on the outcomes of the Sustainability Sub-group. In discussion it became apparent that different partners have different views on what they would like to see continue post HEFCE funding. Some views supported the overall aims of creating and maintaining this progression map; others looked to the continuation of more specific activities such as the opportunities for further education colleges to continue to be supported in the delivery of modules.
- 3.2. To gain a more objective view of each participant a series of questions were asked and using voting technology they were asked to rate in order of importance (1 low to 5 high) of the following statements.

Statement	Rating				
	1	2	3	4	5
Having created a West Yorkshire map of progression routes for vocational learners by the end of the project, how important would it be to maintain it post HEFCE funding?		12%	20%	28%	40%
How important is it for this map of progression routes to be further developed post HEFCE funding?		12%	20%	24%	46%
If we continue to develop the progression route map, how important is it to have some form of central co-ordination and communication?	4%	8%	24%	20%	46%
How important is it to maintain the resources developed by WYLLN post HEFCE funding?	4%	12%	36%	28%	20%
Through the use of IAGnow we will be in a position to provide information on the progression of non-traditional learners into and through HE. How important will it be to continue to receive this information post HEFCE funding?	12%	32%	8%	16%	32%

3.3. While this evidence shows a degree of support for the continuation of the Network in some form, it appears there is not a consistency of view of the benefits each individual institution would gain. Moreover it is still somewhat early in the project to understand whether the success measures identified are making an impact.

4. Extended the current period of funding.

4.1. As was indicated in the HEFCE report, the Network is currently managing an under spend, due to the delayed start up. This gives the WYLLN an opportunity to consider the option of working through a fourth year with a minimal amount of central co-ordination funded by HEFCE. This co-ordination would enable continuing

- monitoring of 2010/11 ASNs
- support for partners in the development and approval of new Progression Agreements
- reporting on key indicators to HEFCE and the Management Board (or replacement structure)
- liaison with the external evaluator
- communication of new developments and fourth year outcomes to partners
- enable research and the production of academic papers on the impact the LLN has had on learners and partner institutions/

- 4.2. Most importantly, maintaining central co-ordination will enable an evaluation of the impact of progression agreements. While the Network should have exceeded its targets for the number of progression agreements by July 2010. The majority of the learners will not have progressed into HE until September and completed their first year of study by June 2011. A fourth year would enable a thorough evaluation on which a new business plan could be developed, if agreed. It would also give an indication of the level of resource that would be needed, if the Network was to continue, and whether this would be affordable.
- 4.3. If it was thought that it would be best not to extend the project into a fourth year, the impact of progression agreements could be made by the external evaluator reporting directly to the Board. However the decision on any future of the WYLLN and the design of the business model would have to be completed by July 2010.

5. Considerations and recommendations

- 5.1. The Board is asked to consider the paper and endorse the approach to developing the Sustainability Strategy.
- 5.2. It is recommended, subject to critical analysis of the budgets presented in the financial report (agenda item 8), that the Board agrees to submit a proposal to HEFCE to extend the period of funding into a fourth year as outlined in paragraph 4.1.