

Skills for Business Growth

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To ensure Kent has the right skilled people both for today and in the future.
- 1.2. To ensure that employment support and adult skills training provision in Kent is shaped by, and respond to, the current and future needs and aspirations of employers and residents, in line with strategic business priorities as outlined in Bold Steps.
- 1.3. To identify and maximise the opportunities to stimulate and support growth in existing and emerging employment sectors as highlighted through the business growth consultations programme.

2. Intentions for the Skills for Business Growth group

- 2.1. The Skills for Business Growth group (SBG) will be a strategic, employer-led body. Its precise nature and mode of operation is expected to evolve over time. The employers on the board will change as the agenda develops and progresses.
- 2.2. The SBG will focus on adult skills and employment, and the transitional phase from school, FE, and HE to work. NEETS and employment programmes will be a key priority.

3. Coverage

- 3.1. The geographic area covered by the SBG will be all Kent and Medway districts.

4. Role

The role of the SBG is to:

- 4.1. Develop a collective, employer-focused view of the key skills issues as they impact on the economy in Kent.
- 4.2. Input into the adult skills and employment strategy for Kent and Medway, and the wider LEP encompassing East Sussex and greater Essex.
- 4.3. Support an integrated approach to the development of skills and employment initiatives, prioritising sectors identified in the Regeneration framework and building on these through a programme of business consultations.
- 4.4. Establish a focal point of reference with employers in Kent to raise their demand for, and investment in, skills provision. This will include utilising existing employer forums and networks to influence strategic partners, and acting as a conduit and voice for employers on matters relating to skills training and employment support programmes. (E.g. Business advisory board, Ambition board, LEP's etc)
- 4.5. Provide a bridge between local, county wide, regional and national policy developments and ensuring that Kent has a strong voice.

5. Accountability

- 5.1. The SBG will be accountable to the Kent Economic Board. It will also exchange information with the Learning and Skills Board and Kent Forum through Ambition board 1. It will also have a key role to ensure that employer demand is articulated in such a way that it can usefully and credibly inform the decisions of commissioning bodies and the way in which providers operate.

6. Membership

- 6.1. The organisations to be represented on the SBG may change from time to time; such changes would be subject to agreement by the Board itself.
- 6.2. Businesses must have real ownership of this strategy, real input to it and real traction over the system therefore representation should be at a senior level (Chief Executive or Director, or equivalent).
- 6.3. Private sector members covering both large companies and SMEs will be encouraged to join.
- 6.4. Members are expected to commit to attend meetings: this is important for continuity and credibility. One suitably senior level Deputy may be named by each Member to substitute for them in exceptional circumstances, provided they are fully authorised to act in that Member's behalf.

The initial composition proposed is:

| | Number |
|---|--------|
| 1. Key Employers (aiming for 1 rep. from each of the priority sectors identified in Regeneration framework) | 10 |
| 2. Provider representation. | 3 |
| 3. Kent County Council. | 2 |
| 4. Skills Funding Agency / Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. | 1 |
| 5. Department for Work and Pensions | 1 |
| Total | 17 |

7. Chairmanship

- 7.1. The Board is currently chaired by Paul Carter, leader of Kent County Council.
- 7.2. The term of office for the chair will be for 18 months but may be renewed with the support of a majority of members and the consent of the nominee.
- 7.3. The Board may appoint a Deputy Chairman to chair any meetings where the Chairman is unavoidably absent.

8. Meetings

- 8.1. The SBG will meet 4 times a year. Extra meetings may be called at the discretion of the chair e.g. during the set-up phase and at particularly critical times of the employment and skills funding cycle.
- 8.2. There may also be sub-groups to tackle specific issues or to meet with specific policy makers, funders and providers with which the SBG wants to engage.

9. Decision making

- 9.1. Board decisions will aim to achieve consensus, but where this cannot be achieved decisions will be carried where there is support from a simple majority of the [voting] members present. The Chairman will have a casting vote in the event of a tied result.