

people:skills:jobs:



Department for  
**Employment  
and Learning**  
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# Structured to Deliver Success



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# Foreword

Much is made of the Northern Ireland Executive's focus on the need to grow the economy. However, it is clear that in these difficult financial times, the levers we have to bring about the changes needed are limited. But with challenges come opportunities and this is our opportunity for Northern Ireland to stand out from others by doing things differently.

Central to the delivery of the Executive's economic policy are our people and their skills, qualifications, talents and leadership. As such, as Minister I have ensured that individuals, like you, are at the heart of my Department's work.

Over the last 18 months, I have had the privilege of meeting many people who have been assisted by the Department through our programmes and funding. These include those who have learnt new skills and secured employment and employees in companies who have gained new skills, through, for example, the ApprenticeshipsNI programme, management and leadership courses or customised training through our Skills Solutions service. Businesses also have benefitted and have expanded and recruited staff as well as employers who are looking to invest in Northern Ireland and to take on a new workforce.

Many people are struck by the diversity of the Department's portfolio. Yet all of our work is connected by one theme - equipping people with the qualifications or skills that they need to achieve their full potential and support businesses to grow our economy. This vision is articulated within the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland known as '*Success through Skills - Transforming Futures*' which should be viewed as the overarching strategy for the development of skills in Northern Ireland.

Yet, no strategy should be produced without setting out how it will be implemented. For this reason, the Department has published this Plan which illustrates how each of the main strategies of the Department for Employment and Learning, current and emerging, and their attendant policies are taking forward the Skills Strategy's implementation, in other words, how we are structured to deliver success.

Transformational change is required in how we view the importance of the skills of our workforce. Employers and individuals must also see merit in investing in skills. Government will provide support. As I stressed when I launched the Skills Strategy, only by working together can our vision be achieved. Together we have the potential to transform futures: the futures of individuals, our local companies and our economy.

I hope you find this document useful in setting out how the many strategies fit together to support those coming into the workforce, those already in the workforce and those furthest from the labour market, gain the skills to realise the aspirations set out in '*Success through Skills - Transforming Futures*'.



**DR STEPHEN FARRY MLA**

Minister for Employment and Learning

# Introduction

The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland, known as '*Success through Skills – Transforming Futures*', articulates the overarching vision for the development of skills in Northern Ireland. Its aim is to enable people to access and progress up the skills ladder, in order to:

- raise the skills levels of the whole workforce;
- raise productivity;
- increase levels of social inclusion by enhancing the employability of those currently excluded from the labour market; and
- secure Northern Ireland's future in a global marketplace.

Achieving this strategic aim is dependent on each of the main strategies of the Department for Employment and Learning, current and emerging, and their attendant policies, being implemented effectively. Only then will the strategic goals set out in '*Success through Skills - Transforming Futures*' be achieved.

This document illustrates how the work undertaken by the Department in relation to further education, higher education, training, the Careers Service, the Employment Service and employment law dovetails to provide one overall Skills Implementation Plan, in other words how we are structured to deliver success.

# Context

The Executive is committed to an economic future for Northern Ireland which is underpinned by higher value-added jobs, enhancements to productivity and competitiveness, increased skill levels and improved participation in education and training.

The Programme for Government acknowledges that equipping our workforce, and those entering it, with the skills that employers need is critical to the attraction and creation of the new high quality jobs for the local economy, on which its future prosperity will rest. This is not, however, solely an economic agenda. Skills also contribute to tackling social disadvantage, supporting access to job opportunities, ensuring people have the training and development opportunities to fulfil their potential, so that everyone is equipped to participate fully in the economy.

The Economic Strategy defines the overarching goal of improving the economic competitiveness of the Northern Ireland economy. In order to achieve this, the Executive is committed to strengthening our competitiveness through a focus on export-led economic growth. This means deepening and diversifying our export base, in order to increase employment and wealth. The key drivers will be innovation, research and development and the skills of our workforce.

The Executive aims to rebalance the economy to improve the wealth, employment and living standards of everyone in Northern Ireland. Alongside this, a number of immediate and complementary actions are being taken aimed at rebuilding the economy to address the impact of the global economic downturn, particularly on employment.

In terms of rebalancing, the Executive plans to:

- stimulate innovation, research and development and creativity, so that we widen and deepen our export base;
- improve the skills and employability of the entire workforce, so that people can progress up the skills ladder, thereby delivering higher productivity and increased social inclusion;
- compete effectively within the global economy and be internationally regarded as a good place to live and do business;
- encourage business growth and increase the potential of our local companies, including within the social and rural economies; and
- develop a modern and sustainable economic infrastructure that supports economic growth.

Extra steps which are being taken to help boost business activity and rebuild the economy involve taking action to:

- promote accessible employment opportunities, particularly in areas of economic disadvantage; and
- provide training and re-skilling to those who are unemployed or inactive because of the downturn and address wider barriers to employment, so that people do not become detached from the labour market.

The Department for Employment and Learning has a key role to play in delivering the objectives of the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy. A skilled workforce is essential to a modern, knowledge intensive, export-driven economy. Skills and employability support the exploitation of other key drivers of economic success. They help economies make the most of new opportunities in high valued-added activities, they encourage greater investment (including inward investment) and innovation, they help firms compete successfully in export markets and, ultimately, they support economic growth and enhanced productivity. Skills, employment and innovation commitments underpin the Executive's Economic Strategy and will be central to delivering its economic vision.

Skills and employment are not just essential to the economy; they are essential to social inclusion and addressing poverty. For most people, the best route out of poverty and welfare dependency is through work. The absence of educational attainment and skills in the workforce is associated with a lack of economic activity and investment in the most deprived areas. Tackling skill barriers and other barriers to employment is essential if social inequalities are to be addressed and if economic opportunities are to be opened up to all in society. Consequently, the broad range of actions in the Skills Strategy also supports the Executive's work on delivering social change.

# The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland

The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland, '*Success through Skills – Transforming Futures*', published in May 2011, articulates why a strategy is necessary and the underpinning research and arguments. It also provides, in detail, what needs to be done by 2020, and for whom, if Northern Ireland is to compete successfully in a global market place. It advocates the need to provide training that can equip the workforce with recognised qualifications that meet the current and future skill needs of employers.

The Skills Strategy sets out the types of skills required now and in the future. These include:

- essential skills (literacy, numeracy and information and communications (ICT) );
- employability skills (including team-working, problem-solving and flexibility); and
- occupational/sector skills, including skills and competences established in the Qualifications and Credit Framework and employer specific skills, which build on the qualifications framework.

The Skills Strategy articulates four strategic goals that will help to achieve the skills profile required to enable Northern Ireland to compete globally.

## **Strategic goal 1:**

Increase the proportion of those people in employment with Level 2 skills and above to 84-90% by 2020, from a baseline of 71.2% in 2008.

## **Strategic goal 2:**

Increase the proportion of those people in employment with Level 3 skills and above to 68-76% by 2020, from a baseline of 55.6% in 2008.

## **Strategic goal 3:**

Increase the proportion of those people in employment with Level 4 -8 skills and above to 44-52% by 2020, from a baseline of 33.2% in 2008.

## **Strategic goal 4:**

Increase the numbers qualifying from Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions with graduate and post graduate level courses in STEM subjects (with an emphasis on physical and biological sciences, mathematical and computer science, engineering and technology) by 25 - 30% in 2020, from a baseline of 18% in 2008.



The Strategy also highlights areas for action. In particular, there will be an increased need:

- for people with higher level skills;
- for people with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills;
- for people with management and leadership skills;
- to up-skill those people already in work; and
- to attract certain skills into the workforce.

The vision for skills will only be achieved if we focus on those who:

- are entering the labour force for the first time from our further and higher education institutions;
- are already in the workforce and need to be up-skilled; and
- are currently excluded from the labour force, by providing them with the skills to compete for jobs, retain jobs and progress up the skills ladder.

# Structured to Deliver Success

This document sets out how the Department draws together the major strategies, with other related strands of work, so that the strategic goals set out in ‘*Success through Skills - Transforming Futures*’ can be delivered.

The actions necessary to achieve the goals fall broadly under five themes. These are:

- understanding the demand for skills;
- improving the quality and relevance of education and training;
- improving productivity by increasing the skill levels of the workforce;
- tackling the skills barriers to employment and employability; and
- engaging stakeholders.

All of the following strategies and programmes contribute now or will contribute directly to the success of the five themes. They have been grouped in relation to their impact on the three groups identified in the previous chapter.

## **Those entering the labour force for the first time**

‘*Graduating to Success*’, the Higher Education Strategy, published in April 2012, sets out in detail the direction for higher education policy for the period until 2020. It sets out a vision of a higher education sector which is vibrant and of international calibre; which pursues excellence in teaching and research; which plays a pivotal role in the development of a modern, sustainable, knowledge-based economy; which supports a confident, shared society and which recognises and values diversity. The sector works at four different levels:

- at the individual level: by helping people to maximise their potential through a commitment to excellent teaching and by providing learners with the skills and attributes needed to succeed in an increasingly competitive labour market;
- at the regional economy level: by meeting the skills needs of employers; by promoting excellence in research and development, knowledge transfer and innovation and by acting as a catalyst to attract investment and sustain growth;
- at the community level: through outreach activities; forging links with local communities and building confidence and aspiration; and
- at the wider societal level: by contributing to the development of a more shared and inclusive society; by promoting diversity and cultural development and by a commitment to lifelong learning.

*'Access to Success'* is the Department's Regional Strategy for Widening Participation in Higher Education by students from disadvantaged backgrounds and students with learning difficulties and disabilities. It presents a vision where, by 2020, Northern Ireland will be internationally recognised as a region where participation in higher education is accessible to all, based on academic potential and regardless of social background. The strategy proposes a project-based implementation plan to better target resources at the most disadvantaged, raise the awareness, aspiration and educational attainment of these pupils, improve their progression into and completion of higher education courses.

*'Further Education Means Business'*, published in 2004, sets out the vision for further education and how it will play a vital role in the delivery of the economic vision for Northern Ireland, strengthening economic development, enhancing social cohesion and advancing the individual's skills and learning. This involves:

- raising skills and qualifications levels in areas that meet the needs of the local economy;
- providing an economically focused curriculum for individual learners;
- providing a range of support services to employers and employees;
- developing more flexible approaches to learning through the use of technologies and partnership;
- improving response to local needs; and
- updating and ensuring the quality of college services.

The establishment of six, large area-based colleges underpins the aims and objectives of *'Further Education Means Business'*, through improving co-ordination and collaboration, and facilitating continuous improvement, staff development and quality enhancement.

The Department, in conjunction with the further education sector, has begun a reconsideration of the work of the sector, with a view to refreshing the vision and direction for further education colleges until 2020, taking account of the current economic environment. The intention is to complete the work by April 2013.

*'Success through STEM'*, published in 2011, sets out the actions the Executive and other stakeholders will take to increase the supply of skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The envisaged growth in jobs requiring these STEM skills in Northern Ireland is not being matched by a sufficient growth in the number of young people choosing to study these subjects at school, college and university. The implementation of the Strategy brings together a number of Government departments, along with representatives from business. The Strategy outlines three priority action areas for both Government and business to take forward, to help

increase the supply of these skills. They are co-ordinating business links, managing STEM sector attractiveness and facilitating STEM continuous professional development.

### **Those already in the workforce**

The Department's *'Employer Engagement Plan'*, published in March 2012, identifies a range of actions through which the Department will engage with businesses, to help deliver the key aspects of the Skills Strategy. This includes:

- the determination of actions to address any identified skills gaps in respect of employment relations;
- ways to make it easier for employers to up-skill their workforce to meet their current and future skills needs; and
- the identification of a number of sectors, which will help to rebalance and rebuild the economy, and will be the focus of the Department's employment and skills provision.

*'Training for Success'* is a programme designed for young people aged 16 - 18 (up to 24 years for those requiring additional support) and provides training to give them the tools and skills they need to get a job. This training provides young people with relevant qualifications, as well as the required personal and behavioural skills to progress into work.

The ApprenticeshipsNI Programme, which focuses on those sectors which will help to rebalance the economy, provides quality training in the workplace and supports off-the-job training, to help build Northern Ireland's reputation as a region of highly skilled workers, reaping a range of business benefits for employers, including increased productivity and a more loyal workforce.

The Skills Solutions Service exists to help employers understand and access the Department's training provision, offering a single point of contact for companies wanting to access information on what is available and understand how different programmes could help their business. This service can put in place customized training solutions to meet the specific needs of local employers.

The Assured Skills project aims to provide investors and expanding indigenous companies with the necessary support to deliver the skilled workforce that they require, including the delivery of bespoke training programmes.

The *'Leading to Success'* strategy and implementation plan, published in June 2007, has the objective of ensuring that managerial performance across Northern Ireland is improved. A review of the management development programmes, completed in 2011, has shown that the Department's investment is helping to secure a legacy of more effective people management practices.

## **Those who are currently excluded from the labour force**

*'Pathways to Success'*, the strategy for young people not in education, employment or training, was endorsed by the Executive in May 2012. The aspiration is that, by 2020, every young person will not only have an opportunity to access education, training or other preparation for employment but, to the extent that they are able, also avail of that opportunity.

*'Working for Success'* is the Employment Service Strategy for the Department. The strategy sets out how the Service will be transformed, modernised and delivered to unemployed clients and employers. The key elements include:

- development of a new adult return to work programme (Steps 2 Success) to improve sustained job outcomes;
- a refreshed job-matching service for employers, tailored to meet their needs and providing a direct link to the unemployed; and
- an enhanced frontline which aims to secure a return to employment for clients (off-flow) at the earliest possible opportunity, particularly crucial in light of emerging Welfare Reforms.

The strategy also includes a review of our disability services, to ensure that the employment needs of people with a disability are addressed.

The Youth Employment Scheme was announced in July 2012 and aims to ensure that young people who are currently unemployed are provided, at the earliest possible stage, with the skills to gain jobs, compete for jobs created in the future and retain and progress in those jobs. The measures will seek to ensure that no young person is left behind and to build opportunity for all young people, regardless of their abilities and circumstances to contribute to the development of the skills of the workforce.

*'Economic Inactivity Strategy'* - this new strategy will aim to reduce economic inactivity through skills, training, incentives and job creation. It is currently being developed jointly with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in line with the Executive's commitment in the Programme for Government. A draft strategy will be available for public consultation by January 2013.

The Northern Ireland European Social Fund programme 2007-2013, for which the Department for Employment and Learning is the Managing Authority, has as an overall strategic aim, which is the reduction of economic inactivity and an increase in workforce skills.

## **Cross-cutting strategies**

Underpinning other strategies and working in support of both adults and young people in these three groups are:

*'Preparing for Success'*, the Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Strategy and Implementation Plan, published jointly by the Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning in January 2009, which aims to develop effective career decision makers, leading to increased and appropriate participation in education, training and employment, to support the Department of Education's Revised Curriculum, including the Entitlement Framework policies and to support the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland. Implementation is progressing well and the strategy is due to be reviewed in 2014.

The *'Essential Skills'* strategy and action plan, published in October 2002, which sets out measures to improve the levels of essential skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT in Northern Ireland. Since the commencement of the Strategy until July 2012, there have been nearly 300,000 enrolments (just over 127,000 individuals) in Essential Skills courses. From 2012-2015, the Department's target will be to achieve 30,000 Level 2 Essential Skills qualifications. The target differs from previous years, as only Level 2 qualifications will now be counted, reflecting a focus on the needs of the economy.

All we do must be of the highest possible standards. *'Success through Excellence'*, published in January 2007, is a quality improvement strategy for the further education and training system in Northern Ireland. It presents a vision of quality performance, aligns the work and business processes of partner organisations across the further education and training system and indicates key actions for improvement, in order to process change.

## **The strategies and their context**

It is important to recognise that this is a snapshot of the portfolio of the Department's strategies, policies and programmes, which evolve on an ongoing basis. They should also be set within the context of the part the Department plays within the European landscape, in particular through the *'European Priorities 2012-13 – Winning in Europe'* and the activities of the Barroso taskforce. Programmes and policies will be developed continually and enhanced, in response to the changing environment and changing need.

Annex A1 sets out diagrammatically the key Departmental strategies and their relationship to the Skills Strategy, the Economic Strategy and the Programme for Government.

# Strategic Partners

It would not be possible to deliver this strategic agenda without the key contributions of a wide range of partners and delivery organisations, including:

- the six further education colleges
- the universities and other higher education institutions
- the training providers
- the voluntary and community sector
- the Department's non-governmental departmental bodies, including the Labour Relations Agency (LRA), Ulster Supported Employment Ltd (USEL), CITB-construction skills NI
- employers and their representative bodies
- student representative bodies
- the Education and Training Inspectorate
- the Northern Ireland Adviser on Employment and Skills
- the UK Commission for Employment and Skills
- Sector Skills Councils
- qualifications, curriculum and assessment bodies
- qualifications regulators and
- other Government departments and agencies.

The role played by these partners and delivery organisations is articulated within each of the strategies and programmes set out above.

The Department also works closely with other Government departments, in particular the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (and Invest NI), the Department of Education, the Department for Social Development (and the Social Security Agency) to deliver elements of the Skills Strategy. This work includes the Assured Skills programme, the Foresight Unit, the Careers Strategy, welfare reform and the STEM Strategy.

# Underpinning Infrastructure

Underpinning the delivery of the Department's activities is the essential infrastructure of finance (including European monies), governance arrangements, capital development, the development and use of the evidence base through research and evaluation and the provision and gathering of information and statistics.

The Department is also outward-looking, contributing to a wide range of cross-departmental strategies where we ensure that the employment and skills agenda is fully linked in across Government. Key examples include working with the Department for Social Development/Social Security Agency on Welfare Reform, in particular preparing for the introduction of Universal Credit in October 2013 and with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment/Invest NI on delivery of the Executive's Economic Strategy, including the Northern Ireland Jobs Fund.



# Employment Relations

The Department for Employment and Learning is also responsible for the development and maintenance of a 'fit for purpose' employment law framework.

Under the Executive's Economic Strategy, the Department has committed to carrying out a review of employment law, in line with Better Regulation principles, which will seek to identify opportunities to reduce the regulatory and administrative burden on businesses, whilst maintaining the rights of individual employees. It has been demonstrated that good industrial and employment relations make a valuable contribution to society, both in economic as well as social welfare terms. It is anticipated that the employment law review will make a significant contribution to the improvement of our employment relations framework.

As part of that review, the Department has commissioned research which will examine the barriers preventing small employers in Northern Ireland from meeting their responsibilities under employment law. It may well be the case that this research demonstrates that there are certain skills deficits or gaps in the existing Government/non-Government support systems, which prevent owners/managers from effectively dealing with workplace conflict. Should this be the case, then the Department will examine the ways and means to address any such deficits.

The Department's review of employment law will also seek to identify measures that strengthen employment relations more generally in the workplace and, where workplace disputes do arise, promote early resolution as a mainstream alternative to employment tribunals. The role of line managers is critical and the review will identify the skill sets that are required to manage what the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development refer to as those "difficult conversations".

# Achievement of the Objectives of the Skills Strategy

Annex B presents the Department's activities thematically, to illustrate the contribution each area of activity and the main delivery organisations within them make to the achievement of the first four themes of the Skills Strategy, i.e.:

- understanding the demand for skills;
- improving the quality and relevance of education and training;
- improving productivity by increasing the skill levels of the workforce; and
- tackling the skills barriers to employment and employability.

In taking forward the fifth theme – Engaging with Stakeholders - the Department engages with its stakeholders in a multitude of ways through its programmes and activities. For example, in the coming months, the Department will be launching its Skills Collaboration Fund, through which it will, subject to demand, co-fund focused interventions led by employers that will help them to overcome skills shortages and gaps within their sectors and industries. Another example of improved arrangements for engagement with stakeholders is the establishment of the dedicated Employer Engagement Unit within the Employment Service.

The Department for Employment and Learning recognises the fundamental role that high quality provision and programme performance plays in delivering the Skills Strategy. As part of the Quality Improvement Strategy, *'Success through Excellence'*, the Department produces an annual 'Analysis of the Quality and Performance of DEL Programmes and Provision' report.

# Programme Management and Monitoring

As can be seen throughout this document, the achievement of the aims of the Skills Strategy relies on the successful implementation of a number of strategies across the Department for Employment and Learning. The Department is structured in such a way to ensure the delivery of the strategies: Skills and Industry; Further Education; Higher Education; the Employment Service and Strategy, European and Employment Relations. As such, it is important to have formal Programme Board arrangements in place to report progress, identify issues and monitor achievement against the strategic goals.

The Programme Board will be led by the Permanent Secretary of the Department, who will assume the role of the Programme's Senior Responsible Officer. The Board will consist of:

- Permanent Secretary      Senior Responsible Officer
- Deputy Secretary      responsible for Skills and Industry, Further Education and the Employment Service
- Deputy Secretary      responsible for Higher Education and Strategy, European and Employment Relations
- Assistant Director      responsible for Analytical Services
- Secretariat

The Programme Board will meet quarterly.

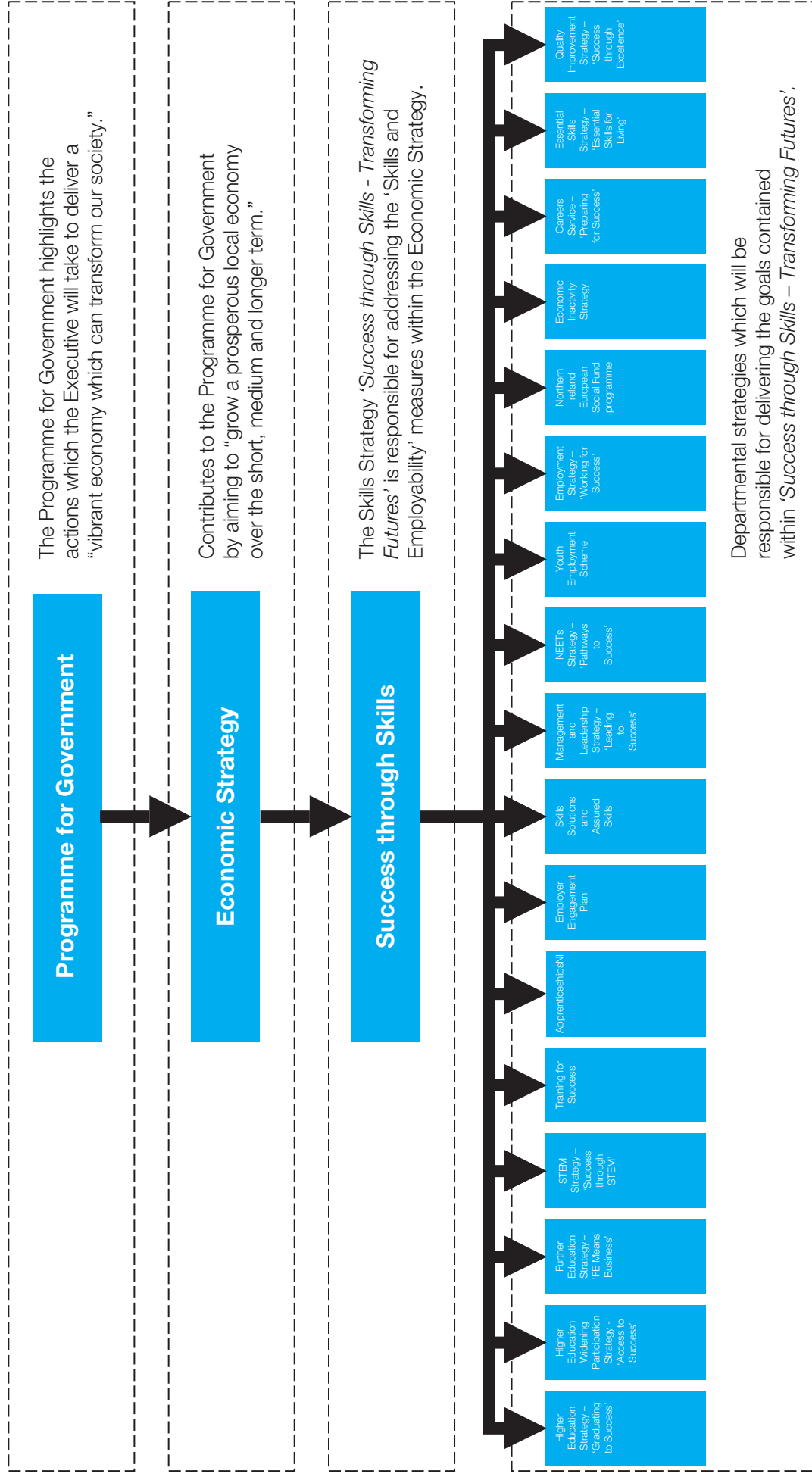
# Conclusion

The delivery of the Skills Strategy is a key pillar of the Executive's Economic Vision and the agenda for Delivering Social Change. As such, equipping people with the skills they need is at the very heart of delivering a prosperous future for individuals, businesses and the Northern Ireland economy.

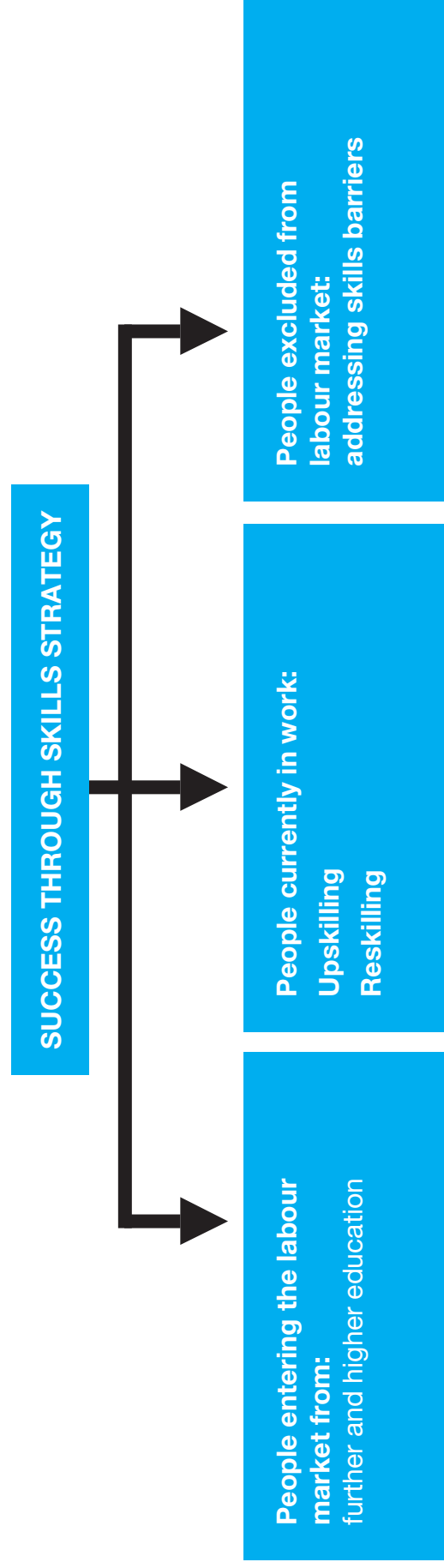
Readers will note that the word “success” is used throughout the document. This is intentional, because we believe if each of the strategies which underpin ‘*Success through Skills – Transforming Futures*’ is delivered, then Northern Ireland will be successful in achieving the goals of the Executive's Programme for Government and the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy.



## ANNEX A1 DEPARTMENTAL STRATEGIES



## ANNEX A2 SUCCESS THROUGH SKILLS STRATEGY



## ANNEX B

### THEME: UNDERSTANDING THE DEMAND FOR SKILLS

This theme considers the way in which the Department can facilitate a better link between qualifications and skills and the needs of the economy.

STRATEGY	PROGRAMME/ INITIATIVE	ACTION	LINKS	DELIVERY PARTNER/ ORGANISATION
Higher Education Strategy - 'Graduating to Success'	Project One: Increase the number of learners undertaking higher education courses in economically relevant subjects.	The universities, by 2013, will bring forward proposals for rebalancing the profile of courses so that the qualifications offered more closely reflect the needs of the economy. There will be an additional 700 places for learners undertaking an economically relevant STEM course.	Graduating to Success	Higher education sector.
Further Education Strategy - 'FE Means Business'	Employer Engagement.	As part of their on-going work with employers, FE colleges acquire an understanding of the skills and qualifications needs of employers in their areas, and develop responses to meet the needs identified.	FE Means Business	Further Education Colleges.
	Work with employers from a number of economically important sectors to help identify and address the particular skills issues.	Sectoral Action Groups and related Action Plans - Hospitality and Tourism; Financial Services; ICT; Food and Drink Processing and Manufacturing; and Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering shortly to commence.	Hospitality and Tourism Future Skills Action Plan Financial Services Future Skills Action Plan ICT Future Skills Action Group ICT Action Plan Food and Drink Processing and Manufacturing Future Skills Action Group	Members of Sectoral Action Groups.
	The work of the Northern Ireland Adviser on Employment and Skills.	Provision of advice to the Minister on the skills issues facing employers.	Identification of Priority Skills Areas in Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland Adviser on Employment and Skills.



Employer Engagement Plan	The work of the UK Commission on Employment and Skills.	The Commission works on a UK wide basis to provide strategic leadership on skills and employment issues, to secure a greater commitment to invest in the skills of people to drive enterprise, jobs and growth. As part of this remit they undertake a number of skills surveys with employers.	Employer Perspectives Survey 2010 Employer Skills Survey 2011	UK Commission for Employment and Skills.
	The work of the Sector Skills Councils.	Each Sector Skills Council provides labour market information in relation to its sector.	Sector Skills Councils	Sector Skills Councils.
	The Department has worked with DETI to establish a Foresight Unit which will help to identify emerging sectors and their specific skill needs. It will also ensure that appropriate training is provided to address these critical needs in order to exploit innovations which lead to wealth creation.	DETI and Department for Employment and Learning collaboration to identify future market opportunities.		Foresight Unit.
	Work to simplify the Department's demand side advisory infrastructure.	Consideration of how to develop a more streamlined and accessible demand side infrastructure.	Employer Engagement Plan	Northern Ireland Adviser on Employment and Skills.
	Harnessing Labour Market Information (LMI) Project. The Department will examine ways by which high quality labour market information, (including current and forecasted future employer demands and future trends) is clear, accessible and useful to all, including careers advisers, careers teachers, parents, the unemployed, job changers and school leavers. This project will help to provide a better link between qualifications and skills and the needs of the economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to determine the LMI needs of user groups;</li> <li>• to gather information on NI user needs and inform the universal services LMI project in line with the UKCES timetable;</li> <li>• to further develop LMI relevant to career planning;</li> <li>• to ensure accessibility of relevant LMI;</li> <li>• to develop skills to interpret and apply LMI in effective career planning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o for careers advisers</li> <li>o by providing a LMI user guide for clients</li> </ul> </li> <li>• to maximise the use of technology in accessing and facilitating the use of LMI by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o scoping options</li> <li>o analysing and agreeing preferred options</li> <li>o implementing the options</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Employer Engagement Plan	Careers Service.

## THEME: IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

This theme concentrates on how the Department can work with employers to encourage them to engage with the supply side (colleges, universities and training providers) and, in doing so, ensure that the training put in place is relevant to business.

STRATEGY	PROGRAMME/INITIATIVE	ACTION	LINKS	DELIVERY PARTNER/ORGANISATION
Higher Education Strategy - 'Graduating to Success'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project One: Increasing the number of learners undertaking higher education courses in economically relevant subjects.</li> <li>Project Four: Developing a single quality assurance framework for all higher education providers in Northern Ireland.</li> <li>Project Five: Creating a more supportive learning environment.</li> <li>Project Six: Enhance the employability prospects of graduates.</li> <li>Project Ten: Establish university bases at the FECs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Department aims to increase the numbers of graduates and postgraduates in economically relevant subjects (with an emphasis on physical and biological sciences, mathematical and computer science, engineering and technology) to 22% in 2020, from a baseline of 18% in 2008. By 2014/15 there will be an additional 700 places for learners undertaking an economically relevant STEM course. The Department will also consider options for establishing an initiative aimed at the economically inactive.</li> <li>The Department will introduce a single quality review system throughout all institutions providing higher education in Northern Ireland providing a fit for purpose high quality learning environment.</li> <li>The Department will ensure that all higher education students have the opportunity to avail of a work placement.</li> <li>The Department, together with the sector, will increase the number of higher education students undertaking a period of work or study in another country by 10%.</li> <li>The Department will pilot the creation of a university base at a further education college.</li> </ul>	Graduating to Success	The higher education sector, the Quality Assurance Agency and employers.
Higher Education Widening Participation Strategy - 'Access to Success'	Outreach and attainment raising, improved workforce skills.	<p>Outreach and attainment raising, improved workforce skills. The Department, in conjunction with the HE institutions, will develop and implement a single integrated regional awareness raising programme to increase the profile and relevance of higher education and skills in underrepresented communities and in the workplace.</p> <p>The Department will make additional funding available to support the expansion of the range of aspiration and attainment raising programmes at school, college, community and the workplace.</p> <p>The Department will work in partnership with universities, FE colleges and employer representatives to increase the number of enrolments in Foundation Degrees each year to 2,500 by 2015. The key measure that the Department will undertake in order to achieve this aim will be the implementation of a sustained and wide-ranging Foundation Degree promotional campaign, focused on raising awareness of Foundation Degrees and their potential benefits among employers and employees/adult returners.</p>	Access to Success	Further Education Colleges, training organisations and other providers.

Further Education Strategy - 'FE Means Business'	14 to 19.	<p>The purpose of this area of activity is, in partnership with the Department of Education, to ensure that every young person has the opportunity, through the education and training system, to fulfill their potential. In particular, to ensure that young people can be part of a highly skilled, flexible and innovative workforce which will contribute to meeting the twin goals of economic success and social inclusion. As part of this, this Department, with the FE sector, is considering enhancing further the nature of the FE curriculum offer for 16 to 19 year olds who decide to leave school.</p>	FE Means Business	Further Education Colleges (and Training Organisations).
	Reform of vocational qualifications.	<p>The introduction of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) across the UK as the framework for most vocational qualifications, was a major reform to ensure that vocational qualifications meet the needs of employers and learners. Particular features of the QCF are the flexibility that allows learners to complete (and "bank") units of qualifications which, over time, can combine to form full qualifications, and the fact that employers were more engaged in the content of qualifications through the role played by Sector Skills Councils in the qualification development and approval processes. Some elements of the qualifications development process, in particular the most effective way to involve employers in the process, are currently under further consideration across the UK, and this will continue to involve contribution from Northern Ireland.</p>	FE Means Business	Further Education Colleges/Training Organisations/ other providers.
	E-learning.	<p>The purpose of this project is to ensure that FE colleges use technology effectively to improve the quality of the learning experience for students, and to use technology to deliver learning in more flexible ways, in particular distance learning (e-learning). This area has been developed to the stage where it has now been "mainstreamed" within colleges. However, the Department will continue to monitor the extent to which colleges are using e-learning approaches, and to ensure that high levels of quality are maintained.</p>	FE Means Business	Further Education Colleges.
	Economically focused curriculum.	<p>The purpose of this area of activity is to ensure that the curriculum provided by FE colleges is focused on the needs of the economy. There are a number of dimensions to this: ensuring that at least 95% of colleges' provision leads to qualifications on the regulated qualifications frameworks, in particular the new Qualifications and Credit Framework (see also the reform of vocational qualifications entry); that over 90% of college provision is at Level 2 and Level 3; and that colleges have a particular focus on provision in Northern Ireland's priority sectors of the economy. A current piece of work is to consider how the new priority sectors for the economy can be reflected in college provision.</p>	FE Means Business	Further Education Colleges.

## THEME: IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING (CONTINUED)

STRATEGY	PROGRAMME/ INITIATIVE	ACTION	LINKS	DELIVERY PARTNER/ ORGANISATION
Employer Engagement Plan	Expanding Assured Skills.	The Department will, subject to the demands of foreign direct investment clients and expanding Northern Ireland businesses, deliver up to six projects under the Assured Skills programme, helping to create in excess of 600 jobs.	Assured Skills	Invest NI.
	Skills delivery model for emerging sectors/MATRIX.	The Department will identify a mechanism to capture advice on the critical skill needs of the emerging sectors and, if necessary, will put in place interventions by the further and higher education sectors to address these critical skill needs.	Employer Engagement Plan	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Invest NI.
	Expanding placements and scholarships.	The Department will set out how it, together with other key players such as the ICT Working Group and the business sub group on STEM, will work with employers to increase the number of placements and scholarships available.	Employer Engagement Plan	STEM Business Sub Group.
	Increase skills in certain areas.	The identification of priority sectors that will be the focus of the Department's provision.	Employer Engagement Plan	Northern Ireland Adviser on Employment and Skills.
	Work with employers from a number of economically important sectors to help identify and address the particular skills issues.	Sectoral Action Groups and related Action Plans - Hospitality and Tourism; Financial Services; ICT; Food and Drink Processing and Manufacturing; and Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering shortly to commence	Hospitality and Tourism Future Skills Action Plan	Sectoral Action Groups.
			Financial Services Future Skills Action Plan	
			ICT Future Skills Action Group	
			ICT Action Plan	
			Food and Drink Processing and Manufacturing Future Skills Action Group	

	Benchmarking Skills Outcomes.	The Department will establish, maintain and publish a set of skills performance data making a comparison between Northern Ireland performance and a selection of other small, open and developed economies. The data will be produced on a regular basis.	Employer Engagement Plan	Further education sector, higher education sector, Careers Service.
	Undertaking a Review of Adult Training.	The Department will establish a policy and funding position for the training of adults in the workplace.	Employer Engagement Plan	
Management and Leadership Strategy - 'Leading to Success'	Enhancing management and leadership training.	The Department will design and pilot management and leadership development intervention models for micro-business, across a range of sectors with a view to offering this provision to all micro-businesses. The Department with Invest NI will put in place an integrated framework for management and leadership to improve advice, support and provision for companies.	Leading to Success	Invest NI.
	Workable and Work Connect programmes.	Work Connect provides pre-employment support for people with disabilities and health related barriers to employment. A contract for service delivery has been awarded to Supported Employment Solutions (with effect from August 2012) and work has commenced on referring suitable clients. Workable (NI) provides in-employment support to clients with disabilities and health related barriers to employment. A contract for service delivery has been awarded with effect from July 2012. Currently circa 380 clients are receiving support through this programme.	Statistical Information	
Employment Strategy - 'Working for Success'	New Employment Programme (in development) (Steps 2 Success).	The Consultation Document issued 20 July 2012. Five public events were held during August to support the consultation process. Questions and answers from those events have been published on the Departmental website. The consultation ended on 12 Oct with 82 responses received. Final design of the programme underway taking account of the responses.		
	Youth Employment Scheme.	By March 2015 the Department will offer 6,000 work experience, skills development or subsidised job opportunities to 18 to 24 year old unemployed people.	Youth Employment Scheme	Employers, employer representative bodies, e.g. CBI, Chambers of Commerce, FSB and Sector Skills Councils.

## THEME: IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING (CONTINUED)

STRATEGY	PROGRAMME/ INITIATIVE	ACTION	LINKS	DELIVERY PARTNER/ ORGANISATION
Careers Strategy - 'Preparing for Success'	Developing effective career decision makers leading to increased and appropriate participation in education, training and employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appoint an information champion in the Careers Service to develop quality and accessibility of labour market information and ensure that careers staff are appropriately trained.</li> <li>• To develop a Careers Information hub to improve access to up-to-date labour market information.</li> <li>• To recruit additional careers advisers to address the need for increased Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) at year 10.</li> <li>• Establish effective partnerships between all post primary schools, further education, training and apprenticeship providers and the Careers Service, to ensure delivery of high quality, impartial careers advice and guidance to young people.</li> <li>• Establish appropriate facilities for the delivery of Careers Information, Advice and Guidance to young people and adults.</li> <li>• Develop a Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) parental support package.</li> <li>• To put in place effective provision of CIAG for young people and adults vulnerable to social exclusion.</li> <li>• To procure effective provision to support Department for Employment and Learning in the delivery of adult guidance services.</li> </ul>	Preparing for Success	Department for Employment and Learning Careers Service and Department of Education.
	Quality and Performance Programme.	The Department will continue to publish its annual report summarising performance in quantitative and qualitative terms. It will revise Success through Excellence to ensure more ongoing monitoring of quality and performance across further education, training and employment programmes.	Annual publication of performance statistics	Education and Training Inspectorate.
Quality Improvement Strategy - 'Success through Excellence'	Outcomes of Quality Assurance Agency - Integrated Quality Enhancement Review of HE in FE.	QAA commenced the four year IQER quality assurance process in academic year 2010/11. All six FE colleges have completed the initial Developmental Engagement stage of IQER and the resulting reports have been issued. QAA will now complete the second and final stage of the IQER process, the summative review stage, in academic years 2012/13 and 2013/14. The summative review addresses all aspects of a college's Department of Employment and Learning funded HE provision and provide judgements on three core themes. Publicly available summative review reports will be published for each of the colleges.	Review of Higher Education in Further Education, including Foundation Degrees (2007)	Quality Assurance Agency and Further Education Colleges.

<p>Essential Skills Strategy - 'Essential Skills for Living'</p>	<p>Essential Skills Provision.</p>	<p>To equip people with the essential skills of numeracy, literacy and ICT.</p>	<p>Essential Skills</p>	<p>Further Education Colleges, training organisations.</p>
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## THEME: IMPROVING PRODUCTIVITY BY INCREASING THE SKILL LEVELS OF THE WORKFORCE

This theme focuses on increasing the skills levels of the individual members of the workforce through up-skilling and ensuring these skills are being effectively utilised.

STRATEGY	PROGRAMME/INITIATIVE	ACTION	LINKS	DELIVERY PARTNER/ ORGANISATION
Higher Education Strategy - 'Graduating to Success'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project One: Increase the number of learners undertaking higher education courses in economically relevant subjects.</li> <li>Project Six: Enhance the employability prospects of graduates.</li> <li>Project Twelve: Establish a flexible lifelong learning system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The universities, by 2013, will bring forward proposals for rebalancing the profile of their courses, so that qualifications offered more closely reflect the needs of the economy.</li> <li>The Department and the sector will seek to increase the number of higher education learners undertaking a period of study or work in another country year on year. By 2020, all learners will have the opportunity to avail of a work placement.</li> <li>The Department will ensure that by 2017 all learners will be able to identify opportunities for lifelong learning through a single, recognised qualifications and credit framework.</li> </ul>	Graduating to Success	Higher education sector, employers, Quality Assurance Agency, Ofqual and the CCEA.
Further Education Strategy - 'FE Means Business'	Economically focused curriculum.	<p>The purpose of this area of activity is to ensure that the curriculum provided by FE colleges is focused on the needs of the economy. There are a number of dimensions to this: ensuring that at least 95% of colleges' provision leads to qualifications on the regulated qualifications frameworks, in particular the new Qualifications and Credit Framework (see also the reform of vocational qualifications entry); that over 90% of college provision is at Level 2 and Level 3; and that colleges have a particular focus on provision in Northern Ireland's priority sectors of the economy. A current piece of work is to consider how the new priority sectors for the economy can be reflected in college provision.</p> <p>The Employer Support Programme aims to improve the further education sector's responsiveness, capacity and expertise to deliver skills support to companies for research and development and innovation; enhance the sector's ability to provide practical support to industry, particularly in priority sectors; and support entrepreneurial activity in companies in priority areas.</p>	FE Means Business	Further Education Colleges.
STEM Strategy - 'Success through STEM'	Employer Engagement.	Working with businesses to raise awareness of the opportunities available in STEM with a view to encouraging more people to study STEM subjects at school, college and university.	STEMworksNI	STEM Business Sub Group.
ApprenticeshipsNI	ApprenticeshipsNI.	To up-skill those people in employment.	ApprenticeshipsNI	Further Education Colleges, training organisations, European Commission/ European Social Fund.



Employer Engagement Plan	Expanding Skills Solutions Service.	The Department will make contact with employers through its Skills Solutions service and respond to their training needs.	Skills Solutions	Sector Skills Councils, Employers, delivery organisations.
	Introducing Higher Apprenticeship pilots in Engineering and ICT.	The Department will have identified employers and launched a pilot initiative, with a view to wider roll out of best practice.	Employer Engagement Plan	Training providers and employers.
	Public/Private ICT Apprenticeship Pilot.	A pilot will be put in place to train a number of ICT Apprentices.		ICT Working Group, IT Assist, Department of Finance and Personnel.
	Expansion of Foundation Degrees.	The Department will increase the number of learners studying full-time or part-time for a foundation degree. The key measure that the Department will undertake in order to achieve this aim will be the implementation of a sustained and wide-ranging Foundation Degree promotional campaign, focused on raising awareness of Foundation Degrees and their potential benefits among employers and employees/adult returners.	Access to Success	Further Education Colleges.
	Skills Health Check.	The Department will establish an appropriate mechanism by which experienced workers can be fast tracked through Departmental programmes.	Employer Engagement Plan	
	Recognising Company Training.	The Department will develop and put in place a mechanism to assist employers to get their in-house training recognised. This will lead to more individuals with no or low qualifications attaining nationally recognised qualifications, which in turn leads to them being more productive and motivated in the workplace. The Department will monitor the number of employers assisted to do this in 2012/13 to inform target setting in subsequent years.	Employer Engagement Plan	CCEA.
	Improving skills utilisation.	The Department will have identified best practice in high performance working and have begun to implement a policy which helps businesses apply best practice in the utilisation of the skills of their workforce.	Employer Engagement Plan	UK Commission for Employment and Skills.
	Attract appropriately skilled people to Northern Ireland.	Through the work of the ICT Working Group, the Department will work with Invest NI to consider ways in which to both 'attract back' and 'attract in' appropriately skilled people to Northern Ireland.		Invest NI and ICT Working Group.
	Expanding Assured Skills.	The Department will, subject to the demands of foreign direct investment clients and expanding Northern Ireland businesses, deliver up to six projects under the Assured Skills programme, helping to create in excess of 600 jobs.	Assured Skills	Invest NI.
	Alternative Dispute Resolution.	The Department will issue a report on the outcome of the SME-focussed research, and will commence work with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and Invest NI to determine the steps that can be taken to address identified skills gaps.	Employer Engagement Plan	Labour Relations Agency and employers.

## THEME: IMPROVING PRODUCTIVITY BY INCREASING THE SKILL LEVELS OF THE WORKFORCE (CONTINUED)

STRATEGY	PROGRAMME/INITIATIVE	ACTION	LINKS	DELIVERY PARTNER/ ORGANISATION
Management and Leadership Strategy - 'Leading to Success'  Essential Skills Strategy - 'Essential Skills for Living'	Made Not Born.	Encourage companies to avail of the Department's Management and Leadership provision to up-skill their employees.	Made Not Born	Training Organisations.
	Investors in People.	Encourage companies to take part in the Investors in People accreditation.	Investors in People	
	Essential Skills Provision.	To equip people with the essential skills of numeracy, literacy and ICT.	Essential Skills	Further Education Colleges/Training Organisations.



## THEME: TACKLING THE SKILLS BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY

This theme is about equipping those who are not in work with the skills necessary for economic activity

STRATEGY	PROGRAMME/INITIATIVE	ACTION	LINKS	DELIVERY PARTNER/ ORGANISATION
Higher Education Strategy - 'Graduating to Success'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project One: Increasing the number of learners undertaking higher education courses in economically relevant subjects.</li> <li>Project Six: Enhance the employability prospects of graduates.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 2014, the Department will have considered options for establishing an initiative aimed at the economically inactive.</li> <li>By 2018, all learners undertaking a higher education course will have a Higher Education Achievement Report. By 2020 the Department and the sector will ensure that all learners will have the opportunity to avail of a work placement. By 2015/16, the Department and the sector will seek to increase the number of learners undertaking a period of work or study in another country by 10%.</li> </ul>	Graduating to Success	Higher education sector.
Higher Education Widening Participation Strategy - 'Access to Success'	Outreach and attainment / aspiration raising.	<p>The Department will develop and implement a single integrated regional awareness raising programme to increase the profile and relevance of higher education and skills in underrepresented communities and in the workplace.</p> <p>The Department will make additional funding available to support the expansion of the range of aspiration and attainment raising programmes at school, college, community and the workplace.</p>	Access to Success	Universities; Government Advertising Unit; Further Education Colleges; Central Procurement Directorate; Appointed Advertising Agency.  Department of Education; Department for Social Development; Further Education Colleges; Universities; Schools, community groups and employers.
	Students with learning difficulties and disabilities.	A review of Department's Additional Support Fund (ASF), which provides £3.5 million in earmarked funding to further education colleges to help meet the additional costs associated with provision for SLDD students, has recently concluded. This has resulted in more defined operational guidance, enhanced progression routes and closer alignment with the Higher Education Disabled Students Allowance.	FE Means Business	Further Education Colleges.

Further Education Strategy - 'FE Means Business'	English for Speakers of Other Languages.	To provide English language training for those who come to live and work in Northern Ireland and whose first language is not English. This can include, for example, those coming from European countries to work in Northern Ireland and those who are seeking asylum here. Providing English language skills enables those settling in Northern Ireland to integrate into Northern Ireland society and to make a contribution to our economy.	FE Means Business	Further Education Colleges.
	Learner access and engagement.	To encourage 'hard-to-reach' adults, who are economically inactive, disengaged from the labour market, with few or no qualifications undertake suitable further education to help prepare them for employment or further learning.	FE Means Business	Further Education Colleges.
	Student support funds.	The FE sector has a range of funds to assist individuals to access further education provision. For example: FE Awards for learners aged over 19 from lower income families providing a maintenance grant to assist with living costs for eligible students (including childcare costs) on an accredited professional and technical course; and a hardship fund for learners aged over 18 from lower income families providing support to eligible learners who are experiencing exceptional financial difficulty with meeting costs associated with learning while enrolled in a FE College on an accredited professional and technical course.	FE Means Business	Further Education Colleges.
Training for Success	Training for Success.	The Department offers a guarantee of a training place through its Training for Success programme for all unemployed young people who are 16-17 years of age, with extended eligibility for those with a disability or from an in-care background. This programme is designed to enable participants to progress to higher level training, further education, or employment by providing training to address personal and social development needs, develop occupational skills and employability skills and, where necessary, Essential Skills training.	Training for Success	Further Education Colleges, Training Organisations.
	Programme-Led Apprenticeships.	Programme-Led Apprenticeships aim to provide young people with the opportunity to participate in a Level 2 Apprenticeship where the participant will work towards achieving an industry-approved Level 2 Apprenticeship Framework. It provides opportunities for young people to follow their chosen career, acquire relevant qualifications and be exposed to the world of work. It aims to facilitate the provision of experienced and qualified young people who meet the skills needs of employers. The programme includes employability, enterprise and careers education tuition.	Programme Led Apprenticeships	Further Education Colleges, Training Organisations.
Employer Engagement Plan	Employability skills.	The Department will outline detailed proposals on how any gaps in the provision of employability skills in education will be addressed.	Employer Engagement Plan	Further Education Colleges.

## THEME: TACKLING THE SKILLS BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY (CONTINUED)

STRATEGY	PROGRAMME/INITIATIVE	ACTION	LINKS	DELIVERY PARTNER/ ORGANISATION
Management and Leadership Strategy - 'Leading to Success'	INTRO Graduate Management Development Programme.	By end of January 2015 to have 300 graduates take up places on the INTRO Graduate Management Development Programme which was re-contracted in January 2012.	INTRO	External Contactor.
NEETs Strategy - 'Pathways to Success'	Pathways to Success Actions.	The cross departmental NEET strategy was endorsed by the Northern Ireland Executive on 31 May 2012. Implementation is being taken forward by service delivery departments and the Department for Employment and Learning is introducing additional new measures to assist young people in the 16- 18 and 18 -24 age groups to overcome barriers to participation.	Pathways to Success	All Government Departments.
Employment Strategy - 'Working for Success'	Employer Engagement Unit.	The Department has established a dedicated Employer Engagement Unit within the Employment Service. By March 2015 the Department will work with Invest NI through the Jobs Fund Initiative in support of their target to create 4,000 jobs.		Invest NI.
	Steps to Work.	In preparation for the introduction of a new employment programme (provisionally called Steps2 Success (NI)) in 2013, to replace the Steps to Work programme, the Department has recently commenced a consultation exercise on its initial proposal.	Steps 2 Success NI consultation	
	Work Connect programme.	Disability Employment Service will monitor the provision of the new Work Connect programme to ensure that it is helping to address the skills barriers to Employment and Employability for this client group.	Disability Employment Service	
	Youth Employment Scheme.	By March 2015 the Department will offer 6,000 work experience, skills development or subsidised job opportunities to 18 to 24 year old unemployed people.	Youth Employment Scheme	Employers, employer representative bodies, e.g. CBI, Chambers of Commerce, FSB and Sector Skills Councils.
	Essential Skills provision.	To equip people with the essential skills of numeracy, literacy and ICT.	Essential Skills Strategy	Further Education Colleges, Training Organisations.
Essential Skills Strategy - 'Essential Skills for Living'				





**THE DEPARTMENT:**

Our aim is to promote learning and skills, to prepare people for work and to support the economy.

[This document is available in other formats upon request.](#)

**Further Information:**

telephone: 028 9090 5273

fax: 028 9090 5360

e-mail: [successthroughskills@delni.gov.uk](mailto:successthroughskills@delni.gov.uk)

website: [www.delni.gov.uk](http://www.delni.gov.uk)