

Increasing Job Outcomes in FE Programmes

Communities into Training and Employment



Project Synopsis

This project aimed to increase job entry rates across the FE sector. CITE developed a Job Readiness Diagnostic methodology that enables staff to work with learners to identify their suitability for a specific course or intervention. Working with partners, CITE piloted the methodology which showed:

- Assessing job readiness is as much about approach as it is about tools
- Thinking about the specific requirements of a job against the broadest range of learner needs and circumstances is critical.

Project Aims

The project aimed to assist the FE sector to increase job entry rates for programmes for the unemployed and other relevant provision by developing an effective Job Readiness Diagnostic Methodology and piloting a new 'Job Hub' which provides intensive job brokerage and job search support to individuals who are job ready. It was hoped that this would address the need to improve job entry rates across the sector.

Building on the LSIS Skills and Employer Responsiveness Framework, CITE wanted to extend this concept by developing a detailed, operationally focused Job Readiness Diagnostic Methodology that strategically supports and improves FE programme planning and delivery. The project aimed to help colleges become more employer focused while meeting the cultural and structural needs of the FE sector.

Project Delivery

The project comprised of two key delivery phases:

- Development of the methodology
- Piloting the methodology with 3 FE colleges (Leicester College, College of Haringey Enfield and North east London and South Thames College)

CITE led the process of development building on its extensive and successful employer focused work in helping unemployed people into work. The project developed templates that structured assessment work around four areas of exploration with learners:

- Personal circumstances
- Job specific skills
- Employment skills (e.g. basic skills plus social and organisational skills)
- Job search skills

Critically the templates were developed against specific job roles in recognition that requirements against each of the four headings would vary according to the specific job. The templates allowed for a rating to be agreed with the job seeker; this could be based on other specific assessment tools or on an active conversation with the learner.

Templates could be used to assess job readiness prior to entering a course or programme. They could also be used during the course to assess progress or at the end of the course. The template also provided the facility to be output to a “spider gram” to provide a more visual representation of job readiness.

A variety of templates (for different job roles) were piloted with over 300 learners in 3 colleges with a range of learners and settings:

- Learners referred by the college to a specifically created “Job Hub” facility at the end of their course
- Prospective learners wanting to join programmes for the unemployed
- Learners at the start of employability courses

Approach

The methodology provides a structure and approach within which staff can think about job readiness with learners. It is not a “toolkit”; the template structures a series of questions against which staff can explore job readiness with learners.

Customisation

The methodology works best when the template is customised to a specific job role or course – some college staff in practice found this a complex task as they did not always have good knowledge of employer requirements.

Goals

Learners engage much better with the methodology when there is a specific job goal in sight. This also enables a more meaningful customisation of the template.

Learner awareness

The approach requires learners to have an awareness of themselves in relation to the specific areas under discussion. It also works best where staff have a good knowledge of learners and/or are able to quickly establish rapport and trust.

Skills

While the methodology provides a structure and approach, staff still need to be highly skilled at working with learners, establishing rapport, knowledgeable about employers’ needs and be able to motivate learners to further action.

Integration

The methodology needs to be further integrated into college life. It is not a stand alone “product”; if colleges want to increase job outcomes they need to use the methodology more widely across a broader range of activities.

Project Outcomes

Activity	Target	Actual	Variance %
Learners assessed for job readiness using JRDM	314	317	1
Jobseekers supported through Job Hub	112	80	-29
Job search workshops delivered	26	29	12

NB: underachievement of the numbers supported through the Job Hub points to the need to integrate the methodology more widely across the college setting.

Other outcomes included:

- Development of methodology template
- Development of “spider gram” representation of assessments
- Development of thinking across college teams on the need for job readiness assessment and a commitment to improving this in the future
- Recognition of the need for staff training and support in this area

The longer term impact of the methodology is more difficult to measure. All partners agreed that the methodology needed to be used over a longer period of time to assess impact on job entry rates. However the following was noted:

- Where used to assess learners’ suitability for a specific course for young people, dropout rates fell significantly from 40% to 10% of starts
- Job entry rates on vacancy specific courses were excellent where 68% of course attendees received a job offer.

Future usage of the methodology will rely on the commitment of individual colleges to improving job entry rates. From next year funding will be earmarked to be awarded against job outcomes; in this context colleges may feel the need to provide a clearer structure and approach to getting learners into work. However, it must be remembered that the project has provided the approach; colleges will still need to consider:

- Organisational structure
- Knowledge of vacancies and employers’ needs
- Staff skills

Sharing of Project Findings

Examples of the templates and spider grams have been uploaded to the Excellence Gateway. A copy of the full project evaluation is also available from CITE.

Further support on structuring the assessment of job readiness within college institutions, how to increase knowledge of vacancy specific work or developing staff skills in this area can be obtained from Jo Barter at CITE (jo@cite4jobs.org) or Ian Lewis at Leicester College (ILewis@leicestercollege.ac.uk)