

SEEDA's Achievements for: Learning, Skills and Workforce Development 1999-2003

Introduction

The South East contributes £122 billion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and has particular strengths in the business services and advanced manufacturing sectors. Economic activity rates and employment rates are higher than the other English regions but are modest in a European or global context. This demand for a highly skilled workforce from our growing high technology businesses is matched by demands for a more effective service sector.

SEEDA's Learning and Skills Division continued to work with partners throughout 2002-2003 towards the objectives set out in the Regional Economic Strategy (RES). By 2012, the aim is that the South East will be one of the top 15 regions in the world in terms of labour productivity and employment rates.



SEEDA appointed six Sector Skills Development Managers based in Local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs) with responsibilities for sectors ranging from Aerospace to Care and Early Years.

There are four priorities behind this aim:

- Skills for Productivity – underpin productivity, enable adaptability, progress sector development and increase entrepreneurship;
- Participation in Prosperity – create region-wide labour market equity and balance;
- Learning for All – encourage people to learn so they can meet employment opportunities;
- Social Dialogue – enable the workforce to be fully involved in anticipating and preparing for change in the workplace and identifying best employment practices.

SEEDA has achieved much in delivering the objectives within each of these four priority areas. The Division has had an outstanding year achieving the forecast outputs in the Corporate Plan (July 2002) and is currently working on 69 projects to facilitate this cultural change and to increase the skills of individuals.

Learning and Skills Achievements

SEEDA has continued to listen to the needs of partners, employers and individuals and drawn on analysis on the current and future labour markets. We have particularly focused on:

- Improving literacy and numeracy within the workplace to maximise the potential of all those in work. There have been 8,134 recipients of workplace basic skills programmes;
- To reach out to excluded communities and facilitate lifelong learning to encourage skills development. Reached out to 197 voluntary and community groups through the Get Wired for Free programme in the last quarter alone;
- Supporting businesses to acquire first-rate management skills that will help keep them in business, grow and make their businesses more productive. Seven pilot projects running targeting 3,000 participants;
- Investing in skills development in particular sectors – high technology, engineering/ electronics, information technology, creative and media industry and pharmaceutical/bioscience – to help maintain their competitive advantage and to ensure that they have the necessary skills to seize the challenges that the future will present. For example, the rapid product development group achieved 881 learning opportunities;
- Promoting effective partnership working within the workplace through employers, trade unions, employees and local communities to ensure that organisations are equipped to deal with change. Provided 15,822 learning opportunities aimed at employees in the workplace;
- Promoting the importance of learning and raising awareness that learning results in successful career development through projects such as Upgrade Yourself.

Key Facts

SEEDA investment in learning across all sectors delivered 15,822 learning opportunities in the last year.

- 2,512 businesses received specialist advice;
- The work SEEDA carried out with partners and projects in basic skills provision saw 8,134 people benefiting from basic skills training;
- In addressing the need for higher level skills, SEEDA funding and partnership working meant that 3,292 people underwent training in areas of high level skills like composites, opto-electronics and rapid prototyping;
- Thanks to investment by SEEDA, 5,472 people underwent ICT training programmes in the region.



The SEEDA-funded Rapid Product Development Network jointly represents one of the largest educational resources of Rapid Product Development staff and equipment in Europe.

The first Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action (FRESA) for the South East sets out how we can build and maintain a healthy labour market for the region. This means building on success, addressing market failure and ensuring participation in employment and skills for all. The FRESA implementation in the South East is titled Action South East. It is an ambitious approach to link the supply and demand sides of skills in business and education.

The Framework has been developed by the key regional partners responsible for labour market support and reform, represented on the South East Regional Employment and Skills Forum.

- **Employers** from the private, public, voluntary and community sectors who engage with intermediary agencies which design and operate initiatives that shape the supply of skilled workers that businesses need to compete in competitive national and global markets;
- **Individuals** who recognise the need to constantly update and improve their skills to maintain and boost their employability;
- **A culture of enterprise and innovation** that is highly prized and recognised as the foundations for success for both employers and employees;
- **Supporting agencies** that are knowledgeable and responsive to market failure through the design of solutions that are timely, effective and sustainable.

It marks the start of a genuinely collaborative approach to addressing employment and skills issues in the South East and SEEDA received acclaim on the delivery and approach of its regional employment and skills plan.



Action South East
developing the future workforce

The Action South East Partnership, currently chaired by SEEDA, is the new and powerful partnership that will ensure the future success of the South East region by placing employment and skills centre stage. The Partnership is responsible for implementing the Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action (FRESA), which will help ensure a healthy labour market in which employers and individuals get effective help in meeting their employment and skills needs.



7,000 organisations in the South East benefit from the Quarterly Bulletin.

SEEDA and Skills Insight have continued to develop the region's labour market information and intelligence base. A quarterly bulletin with the latest skills information has been disseminated across 7,000 organisations in the South East. The Annual Skills Review (2002 and update versions) which draws on the Skills Foresight Forecasting Model has been well received and raised awareness of skills issues in the South East region, helping SEEDA's policy development. The Skills Foresight Forecasting Model has also been disseminated to the LLSCs and sub-regions for their use.

SEEDA continues to deliver innovative and effective results against the objectives set out in the RES.

RES Objective: Ensure skills support for sector and cluster development

SEEDA has invested in skills and related developments to support the growth of the South East's diverse sector base. SEEDA sector groups, National Training Organisations and the emerging Sector Skills Councils have helped to shape our plans and to focus on the key priorities for the region.

Specialist skills sub-groups have been formed out of sector groups such as construction and pharma-bio. SEEDA also appointed six Sector Skills Development Managers during the year who are based within the Local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs) with specific responsibilities for skills needs within their sectors.

Employer Learner Networks have been identified and are starting to improve links between businesses and training providers, Higher Education Institutions (HEI), Further Education (FE), Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs).



SEEDA appointed six Sector Skills Development Managers in the year to focus on specific sector needs.

RES Objective: Promote management and entrepreneurial development

Poor management is a major contributor to productivity loss with one study concluding that it equated to 65% of lost time. Poor management can also lead to companies going out of business despite sometimes having good products and a buoyant market. The South East faces a significant demand for management expertise as de-layering, changing markets and changing work styles result in more people needing these valuable skills.

In response, SEEDA has piloted a number of innovative approaches that encourage managers to take up new skills, as well as providing material that is needed in more flexible forms such as the e-skills into Business programme which has provided online, low cost, "anytime anywhere" training that gives staff the skills today that they can put into practice tomorrow.

SEEDA has recently contracted and set up one regional and six sub-regional pilot projects to support 3,000 individuals and 1,000 companies in the South East. The aim of all the projects are to increase the number of business mentors, employer learning networks and use of diagnostic packages to increase productivity in the businesses taking part.



The SEEDA-funded Stepping Stones project at the Oxford Radcliffe Hospital Trust. Learners receiving workplace literacy, numeracy support from a Stepping Stones tutor at one of the Trust Hospital's training rooms.

RES Objective: Enhance the regional role of higher education

Effective relationships have been forged with Higher and Further Education establishments and Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) to create shared priorities and to develop flexible training programmes to address specific sector needs. In addition the Sector Skills Development Managers have been working with key delivery intermediaries and training providers to shape training and skills programmes in response to specific sector skills needs.

RES Objective: Promote workplace learning

Workplace basic skills programmes for NHS employees is now an area of critical interest that SEEDA continues to develop. Extensive partnership working has enabled SEEDA to engage with more than 21 Trusts, and also with the newly formed Primary Care Trusts, who are responding to the growing awareness of the need to improve the literacy, numeracy and communication skills of their workforce. SEEDA held three events to disseminate our progress so far and our work is now informing the NHS University and the South East workforce development confederations. This has developed into forming partnerships with them for funding and roll-out of our Basic Skills programmes across the NHS in the South East. 3,044 learning opportunities were delivered by projects based in the NHS.

SEEDA awards contracts to projects to deliver basic skills in the workplace in innovative ways, seeking to engage with harder to reach groups of workers. One example is Seaford Head Community College who have been working intensively in an industrial estate where 80% of the workers have significant Basic Skills needs. The trainers are local people who have come from similar backgrounds themselves.



SEEDA funds a programme at Seaford Head Community College, which works with the community to improve skills available to local businesses.



3,044 learning opportunities were provided by projects based in the NHS.

RES Objective: Maximise Employability and involvement for all

SEEDA launched innovative initiatives during the year aimed at harnessing the older worker for active participation in the modern workplace. As part of this, a research project is underway at the University of Surrey looking at the transition from work to retirement and how to harness the value offered by older workers through upgrading their skill levels.

Another innovative scheme was launched in the year called 'Get Wired For Free' which offered free refurbished, Internet-ready computers and training to voluntary and community organisations working with older age groups.



SEEDA funded The Older Person's Conference, Winchester, which focused on the role of older people in the region.



RES Objective: Implement a comprehensive network of basic skills provision

One in five adults in the region have basic skills needs. The relatively low unemployment rate in the South East means that far more people with basic skills needs are in work than in other RDA regions. In February 2003, SEEDA co-hosted a meeting with Advantage West Midlands where all the RDAs shared their work on responses to the Skills for Life agenda. SEEDA is clearly leading with a comprehensive approach to employer/employee basic skills work and share the knowledge gained with other RDAs to enable them to develop their strategies.

The criteria change for basic skills teaching from a level 2 NVQ to a level 3 NVQ left a shortage of tutors being eligible to teach. SEEDA also identified a lack of training courses to upgrade the tutors. To address this, the Basic Skills team have put 25 projects in place to correct the long-term shortage and have piloted a major initiative in Kent and Medway to examine models of delivery for tutors to meet the need. Through this pilot, SEEDA will enable Basic Skills tutor training to develop and meet the shortages.

SEEDA funded and launched a programme of adult learning tutor training facilities across Kent in 2003. Pictured here are Rachel Batchelor, SEEDA's Learning & Skills Project Manager and Jonathan Shaw MP, at the Thames Gateway Professional Development Centre Launch.

Learning for All

RES objective: Prepare businesses and workforce for future changes

Responding to a growing concern about the number of employees changing jobs, intensive work has been carried out to develop a learning and skills solution to meet the needs of workers faced with redundancy, or whose companies are down sizing.

SEEDA is working in joint partnership with Jobcentre Plus to establish a unit that will provide resources to deliver a range of services to companies and their workers in difficulty.

RES Objective: Reach out to communities

Meridian Spotlight 2002 programme (funded by SEEDA, DfES and LLSCs) focused on the use of the Internet for people to understand their own financial circumstances. This encouraged people to learn computing skills.



4,000 people have enrolled on ICT taster courses across the region.



SEEDA co-funded the Meridian Spotlight 2002 programme, which won Campaigns and Seasons Award at RTS Educational Television Awards.



Learning first aid first hand at Solent Skills Quest.

Solent Skills Quest, a social enterprise training company, has tackled isolated rural SMEs across central Hampshire. The inhibitors to growth are identified and matched to a flexible programme of education and training.

RES Objective: Reach out to the workplace and improve links between business and education

SEEDA is working to promote a culture of entrepreneurship in schools, colleges and universities. Working with the SEEDA Business and International Development Team, Learning and Skills has initiated an academic global regions initiative, to identify key partners and champions in other parts of the world. The objectives include developing international best practice in entrepreneurship and innovation. They also include managing links between regional/government bodies, businesses and universities for greatest effectiveness. Current work is aimed at developing a network of champions in the South East and in partner regions to take this strategy forward for mutual benefit.

SEEDA also gave support to Further Education (FE) colleges in building their capacity to reach out to businesses through an adult FE learning pilot.

In order to enable enterprising graduates to develop their ideas, we are providing support and encouragement through three universities in the Hatcheries project (also known as GRIST – Great Ideas in Science and Technology), which will provide financial support and mentoring to allow students to develop their ideas. This pilot scheme is being carried out in three universities – Brighton, Kent and Surrey – to develop best sustainable practice, with two of the Hatcheries being set up in significantly deprived areas (Hastings and Thanet) to encourage regeneration.



Great Ideas in Science and Technology (GRIST) turns students' ideas into commercial reality.

Social Dialogue Forum

RES Objective: Develop and promote models for social dialogue

In autumn 2002, SEEDA's Workforce Development Group was re-launched as the Social Dialogue Forum, a SEEDA Board Committee chaired by Board Member Barry Camfield. Its purpose is to facilitate dialogue between the social partners at a regional level on matters of joint economic interest in respect of the region's workforce and disseminate good practice on ways of enhancing employee participation and inclusiveness. The Forum comprises senior union and employer representatives, as well as regional representatives from bodies including ACAS, TUC, CBI, EEF and the local government employers organisation. In addition to regular meetings, the Forum ran two key events in 2002-2003 – a Transport Forum in May and a Work Life Balance conference in January.



Social Dialogue Forum - Best practice in employee participation are shared between senior trade union and employer representatives. SEEDA Board Member and Assistant General Secretary of the TGWU, Barry Camfield (centre) leads the initiative.

In September 2002, SEEDA and the six Local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs) were invited to work together, and with partners, on developing a pilot capable of transforming adult learning and skills provision for the benefit of individuals, employers and communities.

The South East Pilot has five overarching objectives, three of which flow from the Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action (FRESA):

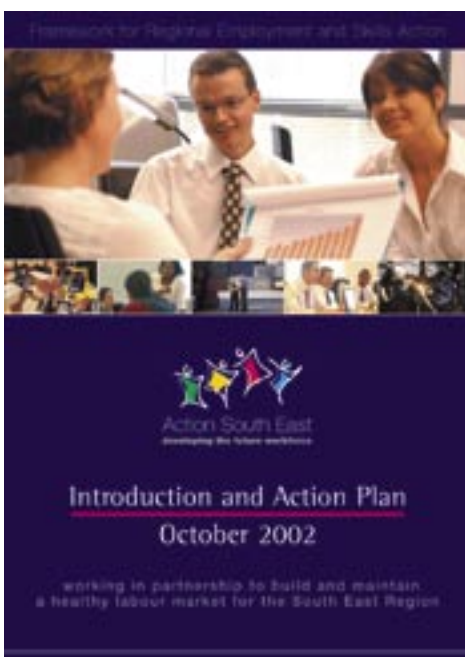
- Improve the planning and funding process for adult learning and skills provision;
- Improve productivity of the economically active population at all skills levels; (FRESA Objective 1)
- Build globally competitive high growth sectors through stronger demand and supply of skills; (FRESA Objective 2)
- Make the most of labour market intelligence enabling individuals and employers to make informed decisions and plan for change; (FRESA Objective 5)
- Contribute to the Department for Education and Skills' review of the funding of adult learning, drawing on early lessons derived from planning and developing the Pilot.



The South East Adult Learning Pilot reflects a wish to build on national and regional strategy and policy, including Success for All, Trust in Further Education, LSC Workforce Development Plan and the FRESA.

Pilot activities reflect:

- A wish to build on national and regional strategy and policy including Success for All, Trust in FE, LSC Workforce Development Plan and the FRESA;
- The need to bridge the gap between aspirations detailed in these strategies and the reality of the employer and adult skills needs and the FE sector today;
- The focus on addressing the needs of adult learners and businesses in an efficient and effective way;
- The need to build on the considerable expertise in the region's colleges, providing them with the support, advice and resource they need to develop sustainable and seamless systems of business support;
- The different needs of localities within the region;
- Best use of public funding to meet identified priorities.





Oxford City - The challenge for the region is to convert its tremendous intellectual capital into greater productivity.

The Global Regions benchmarking exercise (Huggins Report) commissioned by SEEDA, places the region consistently in the top 10 of the 40 global regions for knowledge economy indicators (e.g. ICT, Pharma bio industries) but in the bottom quartile for Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and productivity indicators.

The challenge for the region (and on behalf of the UK, since the SEEDA region provides 48% of the net tax revenue to the Treasury) is to convert the tremendous intellectual capital in the region into greater productivity. The need to raise aspirations through the development of higher level skills as a tool for urban renewal and regeneration has also been recognised by SEEDA. The development of a University Centre in the centre of Hastings plays a key role in the Hastings and Bexhill Task Force, and the provision of a LearnDirect centre in Hastings will also have a substantial effect on skills and employment prospects.

SEEDA is also supporting the new Multiversity development at Chatham Maritime, involving collaboration between the Universities of Kent and Greenwich and higher education courses from Mid-Kent College. In addition to providing a greater advanced skills base in Kent and Medway to support the development of the knowledge economy in the Thames Gateway, the presence of such a major campus will have a substantial regeneration impact on the government initiative to develop this area. We are also supporting feasibility studies into the development of a new campus in Milton Keynes.

Universities are also playing a role in skills development for sustainability and SEEDA has supported a staff development programme that embraces those aspects of sustainability – environmental, social and economic, that are at the core of the Regional Economic Strategy.

In December 2002, The House of Lords Science and Technology Sub-Committee appointed Lord Patel to conduct an Inquiry into Science and the Regional Development Agencies. SEEDA is the lead agency on science and technology and co-ordinated the RDA responses and provided the overview analysis of the regions responses, drawing attention to the rapid developments made by SEEDA and other regions in areas such as skills development and technology transfer, as well as to the need for improved metrics and output measures, together with reduced bureaucracy for monitoring the impact of Science Engineering and Technology (SET) expenditure on the economy.

SEEDA, in collaboration with the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and the Central Laboratories of the Research Councils (CLRC), developed a proposal for a Joint RDA-Research Council Steering Group, which was unanimously accepted. The Group will be co-chaired by SEEDA and CLRC and, assisted by secondments to SEEDA, will encourage the development of joint initiatives with the research councils on improving knowledge transfer from fundamental research.



As the lead RDA on science and technology we have begun to work closely with Government Departments and research councils to develop the regional role in supporting Science Engineering and Technology (SET) as the base of the knowledge economy. This year, working with the SEEDA Business and International Division, we have co-ordinated work on a Science and Innovation Strategy for the RDAs.

With the encouragement of Lord Sainsbury, we have developed a Regional Science Council. SEEDA is working through the South East Science and Technology Advisory Council (SESTAC) with senior industrialists, vice-chancellors and directors of research institutes to enhance the capability of the region's science and extensive Research and Development (R&D) base. It is already clear that this Council will play a major role in influencing the strategic development of the region's universities. This is emerging as an enhanced role for SEEDA, advising on third leg funding as proposed by the White Paper on Higher Education, and in advising Government Departments on developing regional initiatives.



(Left to right) Patricia Vaz, BT and Graham Gubby, Leader, Rother District Council, celebrating the enabling of the Battle Telephone Exchange, which is the result of a partnership consisting of BT, SEEDA and SEASPACE - Hastings and Bexhill Renaissance Ltd, the company formed to drive the regeneration of the local economy.

Working with more than 80 public and private sector partners underpins SEEDA's ability to deliver learning and skills. The South East Village within SEEDA brings together many of the representative bodies of key partners under one roof, and has proved a great advantage in developing joint action plans on key issues and priorities.

The Division enjoys successful working relationships Local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs), Regional Action in the South East (RAISE) Skills Insight, Learning Partnerships, IAGs, Connexions, Association of South East Colleges (AOSEC) and Higher Education South East (HESE).



Printed on totally chlorine-free paper, 75% recycled and 25% from sustainable forests.



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