

# SEEDA's Achievements for - Learning, Skills and Workforce Development 1999 – 2002

Eleven innovative projects to improve literacy and numeracy in the workplace have benefited from a £1 million drive by SEEDA to improve these skills. The Context Programme developed and run by Basingstoke College of Technology with SEEDA funding, works directly with employers and learning organisations and has already delivered Basic Skills training to a significant portion of the local workforce. Safeway plc (shown below) is one of the employers working successfully with Context.

SEEDA supports adult learning initiatives such as the Community Learning Centre in Cowes, Isle of Wight.



## Introduction

Over the past year 2001-2002, SEEDA has been working with partners across the South East region to bring as many people as possible into employment with the necessary skills to be fully effective.

We have been keen to ensure, through our work with partners, that businesses have access to a workforce with the latest skills required to meet the needs of the economy in the region, both now and in the future. Our activities have been focused on delivering the priorities outlined in the World Class Workforce and World Class Learning chapters of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and have built on the successes of earlier years.

By listening to the needs of partners, employers and individuals and drawing on analysis on the labour market SEEDA focused on:

- Improving literacy and numeracy within the workplace to maximise the potential of all those in work;
- Supporting businesses to acquire first-rate management skills that would help them in business, grow and make their business more productive;
- 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;
- Developing effective partnership working within the workplace through employers, trade unions, employees and local communities to ensure that organisations are equipped to deal with change;
- Promoting the importance of learning and raising awareness that learning results in successful career development.

SEEDA funding enabled Rycotewood College in Thame, Oxon, to build an advanced composites training centre targeting learning in the Automotive Sector.

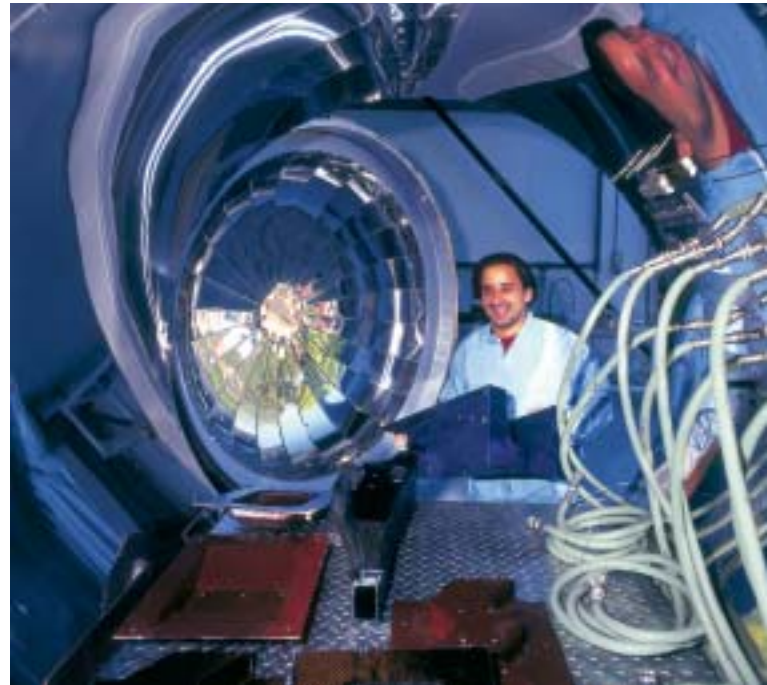
### Key Facts

- There are 548,000 people failing to meet basic literacy standards and 483,000 lacking basic numeracy skills in the South East;
- The South East region attracts 22% of the UK's Foreign Direct Investment;
- On current trends, the South East will need an additional 390,000 employees with skills levels exceeding NVQ Level 2;
- One third (35%) of young people on work based training in the South East leave before completing their training or gaining an NVQ;
- Fewer than 18% of managers of small businesses hold degrees compared with 38% in medium and large businesses;
- The biggest skills gaps in the South East are in professional, technical and personal services occupations, with communication skills highlighted as a problem.

### Outputs

The Learning and Skills team has continued to build on the success of the previous year (2001-2002), by listening to the needs of partners, employers and individuals and then acting by developing projects that support SEEDA's priorities. During 2001-2002 Learning and Skills has supported 6,064 individuals and 2,292 businesses:

- 3,500 people have been given Basic Skills training in the workplace;
- 272 businesses facilitated to provide the support for Basic Skills training;
- Over 2,292 Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) were engaged in 25 projects covering the Manufacturing, Electronics, Media, Bio-Pharmaceutical and Healthcare sectors in developing management and ICT skills at all levels.



SEEDA has invested in skills and related developments to support the growth of the South East's diverse sector base. Specialist skills centres funded by SEEDA have helped sectors maintain a leading edge in manufacturing and engineering. SEEDA has supported 3,725 individuals and 2,020 businesses. SEEDA has been instrumental in helping sectors set up effective networks of employers linked to key professional bodies and has encouraged the development of websites and intranets that keep groups up-to-date with latest trends, sources of help and business opportunities. There has been progress within the individual sectors:-

- PharmaBio – instrumental in setting up a PharmaBio task group to focus on priorities to improve labour and skills supply;
- ICT – SEEDA is talking to Local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs) about networking the new ICT Centres of Vocational Excellence (COVES) across the region;
- Construction – SEEDA is a core member of the South East Construction Skills Forum which is starting to deliver against skills action plan. The Learning and Skills Team was involved with the first partners meeting on local labour strategy for Terminal 5 at Heathrow Airport;

Improving skills at all levels - Oxford-based Business Boffins receive SEEDA funding to provide start-up businesses with real help in their planning.

SEEDA has worked closely with NHS management to deliver ICT and Basic Skills learning through IT Break Into Health; a SEEDA-funded project.



- Tourism – have been working with the sector on the South East strategy and draft action plan has been produced.

### Commitments

SEEDA spent £5.5 million in total during 2001 to 2002 on Learning and Skills issues:

- Just under £1 million was granted to Basic Skills projects/initiatives in total;
- Just over £2.8 million was granted for projects, initiatives and studies in Management Skills and Links with Business;
- Around £600K was spent on research and studies into Learning and Skills issues;
- The balance has been invested in a diversity of projects.

### Building a Culture of Lifelong Learning

SEEDA has supported a diverse range of projects dealing with Lifelong Learning.

One such project is Workforce Basic Skills in Basingstoke led by Basingstoke College of

Technology. This successful multi-agency programme, has been designed to help some of the estimated 8,000 adults in the Basingstoke area whose Basic Skills needs are impeding their progress at work. Due to the success of the project it is now being expanded to the rest of the county.

SME Sustainability Support led by Business Boffins Ltd. in partnership with Oxford Brookes University, has provided mentoring and support services that focuses on the sustainability of new businesses over the vital first three years. In addition, a comprehensive range of professional advisers including Lawyers and Accountants have been brought together to form a faculty of professional advisers.

### Particular Projects – three examples

1. e-skills into Business - a project which has provided a high quality, easy to use Internet based Business Improvement Process for SMEs, which will help them understand the opportunities presented by e-technology while developing the necessary skills for their business, and help them remain competitive in these exciting and challenging times.

2. NHS – IT Break into Health – addressing Basic Skills needs of low skilled workers in the Health Sector, successfully piloted in partnership with the East Kent Hospital Trust. We are expanding the approach to other trusts in the SEEDA region for 2002-03.

3. South East Rapid Product Development Group (RPDG) – has established a Rapid Product Development Network which jointly represents one of the largest educational resources of Rapid Product Development staff and equipment in Europe. The Network has also promoted e-manufacturing activities, to help companies, both individually and in supply-chains, to develop products quickly, efficiently and in a paperless fashion.

### Future Skills Needs

Skills Insight has continued to develop its services to partners providing skills research and analysis. During 2001-2002 Skills Insight has:

- Provided and communicated regional skills intelligence, by identifying the critical skills issues constraining the South East economy;
- Worked with local and regional partners to implement a coherent, sustainable and effective skills and economic research programme;
- Developed a regional centre of excellence in the analysis and dissemination of skills information and intelligence in the South East;
- An Annual Skills Review (ASR) was produced and published in March 2001 and 2002. Both ASRs were launched at the Skills Insight Conferences and distributed to partner organisations and other organisations involved in learning and skills issues.

The ASRs are also available on the Skills Insight website ([www.skills-insight.org.uk](http://www.skills-insight.org.uk)) A quarterly Skills Insight Regional Bulletin was published from September 2001. The fourth issue was published in June 2002.

- Two sector studies funded by SEEDA and managed by Skills Insight reported on skills issues experienced in these sectors: Public Sector and Pharmaceutical-Biotechnology;
- Skills Insight co-ordinated and managed the Skills Audit surveys on behalf of SEEDA and the South East Learning and Skills Councils. This was a survey of 9,500 households in the South East to ascertain the skills levels and individuals' motivations for learning. Summaries are on the Skills Insight website.

A regional report was produced with analyses of regional and sub-regional findings on skills levels and what stops individuals from taking up learning.

- The Skills Forecasting Model, funded by European Social Fund (ESF) through the Skills Foresight in the South East Project, has been developed in partnership with Business Strategies Ltd, SEEDA and the Sector Skills Councils. The model will enable Skills Insight and its partners to plan effectively for future employment changes and skills demanded by the region's economy.

### Developing a Skilled Workforce

Workforce Development has been strengthened by the development of SEEDA's Workforce and Social Dialogue Committee (WDG). This group has brought together the regional Trade Union Congress (TUC), the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), ACAS and public and private sector employers. The group has been signalling issues arising from learning and skills shortfalls, lack of productivity and investment, transport and infrastructure. WDG has organised a well-attended conference entitled "Workforce in the Knowledge Economy" in December 2001 and a successful Forum in May 2002 on "Transport in the South East". The recommendations from the Forum included, circulating best practice models, and the piloting of a green commuting project amongst trade unions and businesses.

SEEDA-funded Intech near Winchester delivers science, technology and mathematics learning for children and their parents in a unique and stimulating format.



Lord Sainsbury, Minister for Science and Innovation (second right), at the launch of the Rapid Product Development Group in Woking. The unique Group, supported by SEEDA, promotes the techniques of super fast product development to industry and education institutions. The giant tennis racket is a model of Dunlop's latest tennis racket, Inferno. The application of Rapid Prototyping techniques to this product halved the normal development time.



SEEDA is working closely with the Unions to enroll a further 160 Lifelong Learning Advisors from all Unions working specifically in the NHS such as GMB, UNISON, RCN and the RCM. Learning and Skills has funded a project led by the Southern and Eastern TUC to train workplace learning representatives to act as learning champions in support of the establishment of workplace programmes in Basic Skills.

### **Improving Literacy and Numeracy**

In recognition of the huge needs of adults to address their Basic Skills, SEEDA continued to invest in projects that aimed to improve the literacy and numeracy shortfalls for people in their places of work. We have supported providers across the South East to deliver to employees in a wide variety of different businesses small and large. Over 3,500 individuals have taken up learning opportunities. Working in partnership with other agencies, we continue to work on a range of initiatives that build the capacity and sustainability in this key area of skill shortage. For example, we have supported a project that delivers literacy and numeracy skills to unskilled workers in the

NHS. This has enabled them to develop their confidence to learn, to raise personal skill levels and in some cases, to improve service and pursue other career opportunities in the NHS Trust.

### **Partners**

The South East Village, established in 1999, has continued to grow and work alongside SEEDA. It includes Skills Insight (Regional Skills Research Unit); National Training Organisation South East Regional Hub (five NTOs); Higher Education South East (representing the 25 Higher Education institutions in the South East); RAISE (co-ordinating the South East's voluntary sector); the Association of South East Colleges (AOSEC); The Learning and Skills Development Agency; Trade Partners UK and the Small Business Service and Jobcentre Plus have moved their Regional Offices to work within SEEDA Headquarters.

Skills Insight, co-located at SEEDA's HQ, is the Skills Research Unit for South East England and is a central hub for the analysis and dissemination of skills and economic-related intelligence in the South East region. The Unit, funded by SEEDA, aims to provide and communicate regional skills and economic intelligence on critical skills issues constraining the South East economy.

### Framework for Regional Employment Skills Action (FRESA)

During 2001-2002 SEEDA has stimulated a commitment among organisations to work towards a common goal. The FRESA has been instrumental in ensuring a collaborative approach to gearing the regional labour market to the achievement of the sustainable economic and social objectives as identified in the Regional Economic Strategy (RES). The FRESA achievements have been to;-

- Set up a Regional Forum which has met monthly since March 2002. It is chaired by John Parsonage of the Learning and Skills team;
- Completed a study of the healthy labour market with indicators. This framework has been used by other RDAs;
- Partners agreed to work together on actions and joint funding;
- Engaged a wide variety of partners in debate;
- Greater understanding of complex issues;



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