

**Belfast Employability and Skills Framework**  
**Consultation Briefing and Questionnaire**



**Belfast**  
City Council

**For further information please contact:**

Economic Development Unit

Cecil Ward Building

4-10 Linenhall Street

Belfast

BT2 8PB

Telephone: 028 90230202

Freephone: 0800 0855 412

Text phone: 028 90270405

Email: [economicdevelopment@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:economicdevelopment@belfastcity.gov.uk)

**How to respond**

Please complete the questionnaire by completing either the online questionnaire or completing this questionnaire in Word format.

Alternative formats of the document can be made available on request and you should forward any such requests using one of the methods detailed above.

**Responses must be received no later than 4pm on 25 September 2015** and should be posted to the above address or emailed to:

[economicdevelopment@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:economicdevelopment@belfastcity.gov.uk)

Please note that all responses will be treated as public, and may be published on the Belfast City Council website. If you do not want your response to be used in this way, or if you would prefer it to be used anonymously, please indicate this when responding (see Statement of Confidentiality and Access to Information Legislation at the end of the document).

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire and for giving us your views.

**Belfast Employability and Skills Framework**

## Consultation Briefing and Questions

### PART 1: CONSULTEE INFORMATION

I am responding as:

An individual

on behalf of an organisation

#### Details:

Name	John McCorry, Geraldine McAteer, Briega Arthurs, Maurice Kinkead, Jackie Redpath
Job title (if applicable)	Chief Executive's
Organisation (if applicable)	Belfast Area Partnerships
Address	c/o: North Belfast Partnership Unit 39, North City Business Centre 2 Duncairn Gardens
Postcode	Belfast – BT15 2GG
Telephone	02890 752990
E-mail	john@nthbp.com

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Please tick the box below if you would like to be included on our mailing list. We will send you information on any further stages of this process.

## PART 2: CONSULTATION ON BELFAST EMPLOYABILITY AND SKILLS FRAMEWORK

This Belfast Employability and Skills Framework and Action Plan for the period 2015 to 2025 sets an ambitious agenda for supporting inclusive economic growth by addressing the key employability and skills challenges in the city.

### Why develop this framework?

Belfast City Council has recently undertaken a residents' survey to identify what issues our citizens want us to address. The top priority from this survey was jobs. Equally, our emerging Belfast Agenda identifies the importance of supporting more jobs and building a stronger economy as the cornerstone of a successful Belfast. In addition to these drivers there are a number of emerging issues behind this framework. These include:

1. The emerging priorities of the Belfast Agenda and draft Integrated Economic Framework for Belfast.
2. The long term challenges Belfast faces around employability and skills.
3. The economic development and regeneration powers coming under Belfast City Council control in 2015 and 2016
4. The boundary changes associated with Local Government Reform and particularly new areas of deprivation

### Core Values

The development of the employability and skills framework and action plan is framed by a number of core values in terms of the local context and the wider strategic fit.

Link to existing policy and framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A developed understanding of the intricacies of economic policy making in Northern Ireland</li> </ul>
Complexity and duplication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A recognition of the complexity of existing approaches to employability and skills and the significant duplication</li> </ul>
Citywide framework for all sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The framework and action plan is for Belfast not just for Belfast City Council</li> </ul>
Bespoke and people focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is bespoke to Belfast and seeks to have a balanced approach combining investment and people</li> </ul>
Long term and outcomes focused approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It adopts a long-term and outcomes focused approach framed by the Belfast Agenda</li> </ul>
Needs and evidence led	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is needs based recognising a required match between resident skills and employer demand</li> </ul>
Appreciation of wider change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A recognition that Belfast sits within the wider context of global economic change</li> </ul>
Aspirational and ambitious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is aspirational and ambitious</li> </ul>

Do you agree with the core values that frame this strategy? Do they fully reflect the Belfast context and wider strategic issues?

Please outline your comments or suggestions

- Belfast Area Partnerships recommend that the Belfast Employability and Skills Framework's (BESF) values need to incorporate the crosscutting principles of equality, and social inclusion proofing and build on best practice.

### The role of Belfast City Council

Without the drive and will of the Council to secure buy in, and without processes to develop its effective delivery, the framework will not instigate the scale of change that is needed. Belfast City Council is in a unique position within the city, and is ideally placed to utilise its key strategic role to influence, cajole and drive forward the framework and action plan. Therefore the role of Belfast City Council must be one of strong stewardship, enabling and coordination. This is reflected in clearly defined ways:

- Coordination of governance: take the lead in drawing together the various partners involved in employability and skills, to ensure activity is coordinated.
- Coordination of delivery: to play the lead role in coordinating programmes of activity around employability and skills, where there are gaps in the market and gaps in the quality of provision (actual delivery will be through a range of partners).

What are your views on Belfast City Council taking a lead role in driving this framework forward? What do you see your organisation's role to be?

Please outline your comments or suggestions

- Belfast Area Partnerships (BAPs) welcome BCC advocating a lead role in the governance, management and coordination of the BESF. It is important that delivery of the various BESF strands are accountable across a range of regeneration indicators: employment, education, skills, investment, etc and are related to achievement of the Belfast Agenda. BAPs expertise and citywide networks can play an important role that facilitates BESF employment and skills partnership to coordinate stakeholders engagement. BAPs can inform and support BESF development and delivery and feel inclusion in the partnership will benefit the outworking and effectiveness of the Frameworks achievements across the city.

### Economic overview

Belfast is a growing international centre and up to the economic downturn was one of fastest growing regional economies in the UK. Between 2002 and 2012, the total GVA of Belfast rose by 1.5% each year, and in 2012, 30.2% of Northern Ireland's economic output was attributed to Belfast.

However, despite the relatively strong growth of the city economy, there is still a very marked polarisation of those who are well qualified and those who have no qualifications or who are low skilled.

Job growth between 2012 and 2025 is forecast to be relatively limited at 4%, but there is forecast to be growth in the city employment rate to 70%.

In addition to the new growth in employment, it is important to consider that there will still be considerable demand across all sectors for replacement of staff who have left their jobs, meaning significant vacancy levels even in those sectors which are not going as rapidly.

The sectors of ICT; Professional, Scientific and Technical activities; Administrative and Support Services; and Human Health and Social Work activities are forecast to account for 76% of employment growth up to 2025.

### **Skills and employability issues**

23% of the working age population in Belfast has no qualifications in 2012, according to Oxford Economics.

There is a significant over supply of lower skilled residents in Belfast, with more demand in the future being for higher skilled labour across many sectors. However there will be an improvement in the reduction in people with no qualifications (a continuation of the improvement over the last decade), and the supply of working age residents qualified to Level 4 and above (graduate level and higher) will also increase, forecast at 34% compared to 28% in 2012. The challenge is to further accelerate these improvements.

The increase in supply of higher skilled residents however, will not match demand, and this will inevitably lead to an increase in net commuters with Level 4 qualifications or above.

Skills and employability issues are a continuing concern for Belfast employers. In 2013 a third of employers had difficulty recruiting, half of those due to lack of skills. Skills shortages are more acute in certain sectors and roles, notably skilled trades and also in professional, associate professional, caring and leisure, and elementary roles. Employability skills such as team working, planning/organisation, problem solving, and communication are a particular gap, whilst work experience and attitude are a much more frequent obstacle for young job seekers (and would be employers) than qualifications.

68,000 Belfast residents are classed as economically inactive (30.8%). Notably over half of this cohort are claiming out of work or 'other' benefits. Welfare reform will impact considerably upon these groups. Many of this inactive population are lower skilled and therefore less likely to be employed.

Only 9.3% of the working age population are self-employed. This is significantly lower than the 14.7% figure for Northern Ireland. This is also lower than in other UK cities such as Liverpool (10.8%), Manchester (14.4%), Newcastle (11.7%), Leeds (12.1%), and Sheffield (10.7%).

It is important to consider that post Local Government Reform, there will be an increased challenge for Belfast with more residents who have either no skills or are low skilled, with an additional 13,000 people who are economically inactive. This will present significant policy and delivery challenges.

### **The challenges associated with employability and skills**

There are six key challenges associated with employability and skills in Belfast which were highlighted by the labour market assessment and the consultation:

1. The lack of employability skills across all sections of the working age population. These combine basic attitudes and abilities that are essential to work, as well as crucial generic skills that contribute to productivity and success from basic to high level roles. This is affecting not only those who are most marginalised from the labour market but also those leaving college and notably university. This is having knock-on effects for access to lower level jobs.
2. Family cultures around schooling, education and the world of work are also affecting employability. In particular this has knock on effects for the ability to tackle the cycle of decline in some neighbourhoods, and for people to move into even the lowest levels of employment opportunity.
3. The demographic aged over 25 lack general technical skills. A significant proportion of the working age population (aged over 25) have left school with no formal qualifications and have subsequently found it very difficult to move into employment. Similarly, there is a large number of over 40 year olds who have been affected by the decline of heavy primary industry and manufacturing, and have been unable to move back into employment with limited skill sets.
4. The low levels of entrepreneurship in Belfast - a constrained entrepreneurial culture means that people are reliant on employment as a route into work. There is a need to link entrepreneurship in education and careers advice offers, and to build a stronger local support package for start-ups.
5. Careers advice and access to work experience opportunities is poor. There is too little quality provision which enables young people in particular to get informed advice about their future.
6. There is a significant amount of complexity and duplication in relation to provision around employability and skills. Interventions are being delivered by a wide range of stakeholders, with no real sense of joining up.

Are the six key challenges identified for employability and skills in Belfast accurate?  
Are there additional challenges prevalent to Belfast that need to be addressed?  
Please outline your comments or suggestions or any supporting information that you consider to be relevant.

- The six key challenges as set out in the BESF are accurate and reflect the complexity of socio-economic issues to be addressed to make the Belfast economy and its people more competitive. Belfast is a city divided by its disconnected transportation system, fractured roads infrastructure, segregated communities and social boundaries. These legacy issues are well researched and documented and will have a bearing on BESF effectiveness if they are not addressed. Welfare Reform and other policy initiatives will also impact of BESF capacity to reach those people furthest from the labour market and in most need of support. Arguably there is a need to move to output funded programmes to reduce client churn and the duplication of services.

## Vision, targets and aims

The **vision** for the Belfast Employability and Skills Framework is:

‘To realise the potential of Belfast’s economy and its people by transforming skills, employability and aspiration, resulting in higher levels of business growth, employment and incomes’

Backing up this vision, the headline **target** is:

To achieve an employment rate that reaches at least 72% by 2025. The Oxford Economics baseline forecast is for a 70% employment rate by 2025.

This increase of 4.4 percentage points from 67.6% in 2013 to 72% in 2025 would mean moving an estimated 17,500 Belfast residents into work. When assessing the 2015-2025 period of this framework, it would mean moving an estimated 14,200 Belfast residents into work that pays (an average increase of approximately 1,400 per year over the ten year period/0.37 percentage points per year).

The overarching vision and target is supported by three supplementary stretching **sub-targets**:

- To reduce the proportion of the working age population with no qualifications from the 2012 baseline of 23% to between 9% and 12% by 2025. The Oxford Economics projection is 16% with no qualifications for 2025.
- To increase the proportion of the working age population with level two qualifications and above from the 2012 baseline of 64% to between 76% and 79% by 2025. The Oxford Economics projection is 72% for 2025.
- To increase the proportion of the working age population with level 4 qualifications and above from the 2012 baseline of 28% to between 37% and 39% by 2025. The Oxford Economics projection is 34% for 2025.

The baseline projections from Oxford Economics are assumptions of what will happen in the current economic and policy environment, without further interventions. The targets represent the additionality of what the framework will aim to achieve. The framework has four key aims, each supported by a suite of objectives. Actions associated with these aims and objectives are specified in a comprehensive action plan. Actions identified are indicative and are subject to agreement by the relevant partnerships, once established.

**Do you feel that the targets are ambitious enough? Do you feel they are achievable? Are there any additional strategic targets you feel should be included?**

Please outline your comments or suggestions

•Arguably, it is the targets’ set by Oxford Economics that should act as the benchmark for BESF. The rationale behind this suggestion is that in the absence of significant additional resources being made available to support BESF interventions and against a backdrop of imposed public sector austerity and global economic uncertainty the economic growth and employability challenges will increase. Consequently, the proposed BESF targets are less obtainable due to external economic factors and the initiative's measure of success and effectiveness therefore undermined.

## Aims

1. To develop a coherent and city wide employability and skills partnership: The consultation and other desk based activities undertaken as part of this work has identified that whilst there is a myriad of activity going on around employability and skills in Belfast, there is little coordination, too much fragmentation and complexity. What is required is a means of joining together this disparate activity and providing a strategic, coherent and city wide approach to employability and skills, through an employability and skills partnership.
2. To provide a rounded and whole-life package of entry and lower level skills development and provision: a significant proportion of the Belfast resident population lack the very basic skills required to move into, and sustain employment. This is a whole life issue and is being affected by the culture in which children are brought up; the technical nature of the education sector; and the restructuring of traditional industry. There is therefore a need for Belfast City Council and other stakeholders to start at Year 0 in a person's life and provide a rounded and whole-life package of entry and lower level skills development and provision.
3. To generate higher level skills which meet the demands of employers and investors: the increase in the supply of labour with high level skills is not currently forecast to match the pace of demand. The consequence, based on previous trends, will be increased reliance on higher skilled commuters into the city over the next decade. This imbalance in the supply and demand of high level skills therefore requires action and is the focus of this aim - to develop more highly skilled Belfast residents.
4. To enable progression routes and employability skills for all: this aim is focused on ensuring that there are clear and accessible progression routes between entry/lower level skills and higher level skills, so that individuals can make the most of their potential through upskilling. This will bring developmental, career advancement and income benefits for individuals, and productivity benefits for their employers.

**What are your views on the 4 keys aims of the strategy? Are they progressive and relevant in meeting the proposed targets for the strategy?**

Please outline your comments or suggestions

- The 4 key aims of the strategy appear relevant to addressing the range of issues faced by BSEF through creation of a framework of coordinated approaches.
- Connections between early years, primary and secondary education and family engagement are essential to improving educational attainment and how this ultimately underpins aspiration and achievement as a pre-cursor to skills and employment aspirations.
- BESF, will need buy-in from other influential stakeholders and policy makers to ensure the strategic framework is sufficiently coordinated and resourced to fulfil its ambitions and outcome delivery targets.

A series of four action plans have been drafted to meet these aims and whilst they include indicative figures these are a starting point for development. It is hoped that these action plans can be shaped further through planning and agreement with the proposed partnerships and operational groups.

## Employability and Skills Framework and Action Plan for Belfast: Consultation

### ACTION PLANS

**Aim 1: to develop a coherent and city wide employability and skills partnership**

#### Action plan for aim 1

Objective	Activity	Time frame	Partners	Resource	Measure
<b>Develop a strategic employability and skills partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Agree partners</li> <li>– Engage key partners</li> <li>– Develop partnership and terms of reference and remit (identify Chair)</li> <li>– Meet on quarterly basis</li> </ul>	Short term	DEL, DSD, DE, Belfast City Council, Sector Skills Agencies, Higher and Further Education providers, recruitment agencies, business representative bodies, training providers, area partnerships, VCS	Existing Belfast City Council budget and in-kind partner time	Process evaluation of Partnership and its function
<b>Develop an operational group to manage objectives 2, 3 and 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Develop resource structure to run operational group</li> <li>– Identify lead person with responsibility for partner engagement and pooling existing resource</li> <li>– Develop sub-group(s)</li> <li>– Identify and secure new resource</li> <li>– Design and commission activities</li> <li>– Monitoring and evaluation</li> </ul>	Short term	Employability and Skills Partnership (accountable body)  Belfast City Council (coordinators)	Existing Belfast City Council budget and in-kind partner time	Evaluation plus performance against wider outcomes
<b>Monitor and evaluate performance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Review performance framework for framework (linked to the Belfast Agenda), and monitor partnership and operational group</li> </ul>	Long term	Employability and Skills Partnership and operational group	Through existing budget (officer time) and targeted resource for MIS and programme	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Develop common approach to data collection (Management Information System)</li> </ul>				coordination role within the Council.	
<b>Connect to Belfast Agenda and economic framework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ensure all activity is reflective of Programme for Government</li> <li>– Implement the Belfast Lifelong Learning Charter</li> <li>– Ensure all activity is framed within Belfast Agenda and connects to community planning and Integrated Economic Framework</li> </ul>	Short term	Employability and Skills Partnership and operational group		Through existing budget (officer time)	Belfast Agenda outcomes and bespoke measures
<b>Connect into and influence business support system and Steps to Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Link into Strategic Economic Partnership and influence</li> </ul>	Medium term	Employability and Skill Partnership and operational group		Through existing budget (officer time)	Evidence of meaningful partnership working

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### Action Plan for Aim 1: To develop a coherent and city-wide employability and skills partnership:

Do you agree with the purpose and partnership structure proposed in the action plan for Aim 1?

- No, there are flaws to the proposed structure. It is recommended that the BESF Partnership members do not include service providers such as training organisation, education projects, to avoid potential conflicts of interest and promote good governance - as these providers will likely bid to deliver BESF services and contracts. Best practice, "Glasgow Works" operated such an independent, yet comprehensive employability

How can these partnerships be developed to maximise impact and effectiveness?

- Build on best practice from elsewhere and learn from the experience of other cities about what does and doesn't work in addressing skills and employability deficits. The Partnership should have an independent Chairperson and operate to an agreed business plan with measurable outcomes that it reports on annually.

Are there other key activities that should be undertaken under Aim 1?

- Providers of services, perhaps set within thematic clusters to facilitate delivery of the BESF aims, should report against BESF Partnership contracts/performance indicators on a quarterly basis to promote collective accountability for agreed outcomes achievements.

Are there additional key partners who should be included and at what level?

- Arguably there is a role for health and social services to play in the Partnership - equally the universities can contribute to the social policy/inclusion debate through research and applied learning responses to addressing complex socio-economic issues.

How can we engage with employers and are further employer structures required?

- Employers are busy people. Therefore it is suggested that BESF Partnership work within existing employer support networks - but review the operation of these networks to ensure they can provide the level and quality of representation that meets the requirements of BESF.

To evaluate impact and performance we need to monitor activity across the sector. How can we best share data and evaluate impact?

- BESF should work with the universities to develop appropriate data collection and performance management systems that deliver the required monitoring and evaluation of inputs - outputs and related outcomes.

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**Aim 2: to provide a rounded and whole-life package of entry and lower level skills development and provision**

### Action plan for aim 2

Action	Activity	Time frame	Partners	Resource	Measure
<b>To work collaboratively with DEL and DE to influence the attainment and attitudes of schools and further education providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Engage with DE, DEL and EA</li> <li>– Broker relationships between schools and business</li> <li>– Develop mentoring and meaningful work experience schemes</li> <li>– Use evidence to influence courses and teaching</li> </ul>	Long term	DE, DEL, EA, Schools, Further and Higher Education Providers, business representative bodies, sector skills agencies	Existing resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Number of Belfast schools engaging with businesses on a regular basis, for mentoring and work experience</li> <li>– Number of work experience opportunities offered to Belfast school children</li> <li>– Satisfaction levels of students and employers</li> </ul>
<b>To create a cultural shift in aspirations through engaging families with complex needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Link Belfast residents to family support programme</li> </ul>	Long term	DEL, DSD	Existing DEL family support programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Number of Belfast residents engaged in family support programme</li> <li>– Number of people entering, education, training or employment</li> <li>– Number of residents engaged who are employed for 6 months and over NEET levels</li> </ul>

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						– % of the population that are workless
<b>To provide work experience opportunities and upskilling for those furthest away from the labour market and for those aged over 24, enhancing their employability skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Review existing provision to support those furthest from the labour market.</li> <li>– Develop initiatives where gaps exists</li> </ul>	Medium term	Belfast City Council, voluntary and community sector, DEL, recruitment agencies, Steps2success providers and employers	Sizeable new resources required		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Number of long term unemployed people gaining essential/basic skills</li> <li>– Number gaining job specific skills/qualifications;</li> <li>– Number entering work and are still employed after 6 and 12 months</li> <li>– Rising income levels</li> </ul>
<b>To join up with transport providers to connect people to skills and jobs opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Engage with providers to explore feasibility of public transport incentives for selected demographics</li> <li>– Engage with providers and large investors to link neighbourhoods to job opportunities</li> <li>– Once established develop a citywide campaign, utilising local media</li> </ul>	Medium term	Translink	Existing resource		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Change in travel to work patterns of Belfast residents (e.g. increase and distance of public transport journeys)</li> <li>– Frequency, cost and directness of public transport linking disadvantaged areas and major centres of employment</li> </ul>

**Action Plan for Aim 2: To provide a rounded and whole-life package of entry and lower level skills development and provision:**

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Do you agree with the proposed actions for Aim 2?

- This aim needs further refinement if it is to address what are deep rooted socio-economic issues. Other agencies and departments need to contribute to the resolution of this aim, including DSD - OFMDFM and the Health Trust given the whole-life aspirations of this aim.

Do you feel the actions can successfully meet Aim 2?

- It is unlikely that this aim will be fully realised in the absence of a multi-agency approach that can deliver bespoke responses to a Belfast City Agenda and be capable of a localised influence of alignment between curriculum - family culture - business - and the economic imperative to grow the Belfast economy.

What challenges do you foresee in achieving the outcomes for Aim 2?

- The overall scale of the socio-economic challenges is so significant and ingrained that the outcomes for this aim may extend beyond the lifetime of the BESF timeline. However, investment in job creation and other employment initiatives for LTU or low or unskilled people need to be created and accessible for people facing social exclusion or living in communities of multiple deprivation.

Are there other key activities that should be undertaken under Aim 2?

- Other key activities to be considered include work based learning or employment/waged based training e.g. Action for Community Employment / Earn as You Learn. School curriculum has to be more closely aligned to job and economic growth.
- School and industry partnerships to promote work based learning and accreditation.

Are there any other partners who should be included?

- DSD - OFMDFM - EA - Belfast Health & Social Care Trust - Community Sector/Community Planning representation would be beneficial e.g. (BAPs input to Belfast Strategic Partnership).

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### Aim 3: To generate higher level skills which meet the demands of employers and investors

#### Action plan for aim 3

Objective	Activity	Time frame	Partners	Resource	Measures
<b>To work with Invest NI, employers and higher education providers to ensure course provision meets business needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Broker relationship between business representative bodies and further and higher education providers</li> <li>– Increase direct employer involvement in design of HE course and sign off</li> <li>– Build on business-business forums which link with HEI</li> <li>– Increase work placements for undergraduate courses</li> <li>– Link into priority sectors identified in Integrated Economic Framework</li> </ul>	Medium term	Belfast City Council, universities, colleges, business representative bodies, sector skills agencies	Existing resource and 'in-kind' partner time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Number of, and participation levels on HEI/business knowledge exchange programmes and projects</li> <li>– Number of courses involving substantial local employer input into design</li> <li>– Number of degree courses with work placements of 6 months+ as standard, and number of placements completed annually</li> <li>– Number of graduates re-employed by placement employers at the end of the course</li> <li>– Number of graduates in graduate level jobs</li> </ul>
<b>To coordinate more higher and advanced level apprenticeships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Local coordination of higher level apprenticeships through localised network</li> </ul>		DEL, Belfast City Council, business representative bodies, Careers Information, Advice and Guidance	Through existing budgets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Number of advanced and higher level apprenticeships started</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Engage with local businesses to drive up apprenticeship numbers, particularly across key sectors.</li> </ul>	Service (CIAGS), colleges, universities, DE.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Number (and %) of advanced and higher apprenticeships completed</li> <li>– Number of advanced/higher apprentices moving into employment</li> <li>– Youth unemployment level</li> </ul>
<b>To attract and retain talent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Develop cohesive and strong narrative espousing the ‘offer’ of Belfast for external talent pool and residents</li> <li>– Broker strong relationships with university careers services to promote the Belfast offer</li> <li>– Joined up approaches to developing graduate placements</li> </ul>	Belfast City Council, universities, business representative bodies, colleges, sector skills agencies	Existing budget and ‘in kind partner time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Number of graduates in graduate level jobs</li> <li>– Number of jobs in knowledge intensive business sectors</li> <li>– Number of businesses offering work placements to graduates</li> </ul>
<b>To stimulate employers to invest in innovation, new markets and skills in order to close output gap</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Link into business support framework and influence to connect with skills</li> <li>– Scale up closer connections and networks between SMEs</li> </ul>	Belfast City Council, Invest NI, colleges, universities, business representative bodies	Primarily through existing budgets and ‘in-kind partner time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Number of enrolments on leadership and management courses</li> <li>– Businesses assisted with skills needs</li> <li>– % of businesses training at least some</li> </ul>

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- in key growth sectors and universities
- Tap into business networks (particularly SMEs) to further encourage local workforce participation in leadership and management courses, particularly those related to enterprise, managing innovation and organisational change
- Building local 'innovation networks' to provide mentoring, share ideas and articulate skills shortages

- of their workforce in the last 12 months
- % of businesses reporting innovation in product development or changes in internal processes
- % of graduates in graduate level jobs

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### Action Plan for Aim 3: To generate higher level skills which meet the demands of employers and investors:

Do you agree with the proposed actions for Aim 3?

- Aim 3 should also take account of the needs of the low skilled and LTU when planning with the business community so that skills gaps can be addressed and entry level job created.

Do you feel the actions can successfully meet Aim 3?

- The stated actions can likely be achieved as their focus is on higher level skills and qualifications "Quick or Easy wins" for this aim. The challenge is in creating opportunities to establish pathways and escalator interventions such as (HEP of BAPs Graduate Internship Programme) for those people furthest from the labour market.

What challenges do you foresee in achieving the outcomes for Aim 3?

- Securing the necessary resources to implement this aim and addressing the required scale of jobs and job placements required from employers will be a significant challenge, especially in a period of economic stagnation.

Are there other activities that should be undertaken under Aim 3?

- BESF needs to incorporate other policy initiatives within its aims, such as Belfast Strategic Partnership's Life Long Learning (Belfast Learning Charter) - University Step up programmes and Science Shop programmes - Social Enterprise and third sector opportunities for community education and pre-employment courses.

Are there any other partners who should be included?

- It is recommended that the third sector has a role to play in supporting this aim, especially representation from voluntary sector, women's sector or section 75 groupings which are underrepresented regarding input to this BESF.

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### Aim 4: To enable progression routes and employability skills for all

#### Action plan for aim 4

Action	Activity	Time frame	Partners	Resource	Measures
<b>Coordinate an enhanced programme of IAG with government departments, better connecting education and employers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Training and briefing programme for IAG advisors on Belfast economy/businesses</li> <li>– Business visits and presentations to make pupils aware of career options and the skills they require</li> <li>– Produce &amp; promote online fact sheets on jobs in different sectors (e.g. salaries, skills needed, competition for jobs)</li> </ul>	Medium term	Careers Information, Advice and Guidance Service (CIAGS), DEL, DE, businesses, schools, colleges, universities, sector skills agencies	Mainstream CIAGS resource, plus small resource to produce fact sheets and drive activity, and use of existing resources in schools/businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Number of pupils engaged in business visits/ presentations</li> <li>– More pupils choosing subjects required by Belfast businesses</li> <li>– Number of under graduates studying subjects required by businesses (e.g. STEM &amp; ICT)</li> <li>– Qualitative satisfaction measures pupils, parents, schools, businesses</li> </ul>
<b>Coordinate and extend internships and placements with employers across the City</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Review existing mechanisms to coordinate and promote apprenticeships, internships and work placements</li> <li>– Develop new initiative (if required) to coordinate and promote apprenticeships,</li> </ul>	Medium term	National Apprenticeship Service, DEL, Belfast City Council, business representatives, colleges, training providers and voluntary and community sector	To be determined, following a review of existing provision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– No. employers having taken on a placement in the last 12 months</li> <li>– Number of interns employed by their internship employer after completion and number in employment after 6 months +</li> <li>– % of placement students in employment or</li> </ul>

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	work placements and internships.				further study 6 months after graduating
<b>Build enterprise, entrepreneurship and self-employment skills through targeted programmes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Enterprise and business start up activity to be provided for aspiring and early stage business starts</li> <li>– Create a referral services for individuals interested in starting a business from key employability partners to business start provision.</li> </ul>	Medium term	Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Task Force partners plus schools, DE and major providers (e.g. Young Enterprise NI)	Significant resource required for pre-enterprise, business start-up and sector specific start-up support. To be funded through existing council budgets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Number of schools and colleges delivering enterprise/self-employment education</li> <li>– Number of pre-start engagements (events and activities)</li> <li>– Number of people moving into self-employment and retained with Belfast</li> <li>– Business start-up rates and number of start-ups by young people (18-24)</li> <li>– Survival rates of new enterprises after 12 months and 3 years</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure opportunities for progression along the skills escalator at all levels, including individualised approaches</b>	<p>Review existing mechanisms to support skill development along the skills escalator</p> <p>Develop new initiative (if required) to develop a 'person centred approach' with</p>	Short term	Business representative organisations, businesses (including SMEs and key sectors)	To be determined, following a review of existing provision. Potential for added value from council resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Number of people gaining essential skills</li> <li>– Number of people gaining job specific skills/qualifications</li> <li>– Number of people entering work from unemployment and</li> </ul>

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	opportunities for a 'skills fund'.					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>still in work 6 months later</li> <li>– Number of people progressing into higher skilled/higher paid work</li> <li>– Number of people who are workless and on health related out of work benefits</li> <li>– Number/% of businesses training at least some of their workforce within last 12 months</li> <li>– Higher median incomes</li> </ul>
<b>Enhance employability skills (pre and post-employment) and how they are developed through education, businesses and the voluntary and community sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Develop linkages between employers and educational partners to create core employability skills</li> <li>– Review the need to create specific initiatives to embed core employability skills</li> </ul>	Medium term	Schools, colleges, universities, employers, DEL, DE, Belfast City Council, sector skills councils	<p>Primarily through existing budgets and 'in-kind partner time.</p> <p>Resources to be identified for new initiatives, if required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Number of employers signing up to commitments as described by 'Employability Assured'</li> <li>– Number of skills gaps reported by employers</li> <li>– Levels of employment and average pay levels of jobs</li> <li>– Employer perceptions of the employability skills of new recruits</li> </ul>	

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- Unemployment level by age group
- % of workless residents

### Action Plan for Aim 4: To enable progression routes and employability skills for all:

Do you agree with the proposed actions for Aim 4?

- In principle this is a priority strand of the BESF and it is therefore important that it is structured carefully in order that it achieves the desired outcome. However, evidence would indicate that DEL - DE and IAGS are not always best placed to deal with the demands of providing these services, to people with no or low skills or qualifications.

Do you feel the actions can successfully meet Aim 4?

- This aim is challenging and might struggle to achieve its stated targets if it fails to build on best practice already tried and tested in address internships - escalators programmes and pre-employment interventions that are connected to communities.

What challenges do you foresee in achieving Aim 4?

- BESF needs to challenge DEL to remove the GCSE criteria for acceptance/funding for apprenticeships. This is a barriers to many people for areas of social and economic deprivation. Employers need encouraged and incentivised to provide opportunities for work based accreditation and on the job learning for people from disadvantage backgrounds.

Are there other key activities that should be undertaken under Aim 4?

- Entrepreneurship needs built into the school curriculum and should include field trips to local enterprise centres, project based enterprise awards and competitions to instil business skills.

Are there any other partners who should be included?

- This aim should build on best practice and evaluation of initiatives such as the HEP Escalator Programme (West Belfast) - Equal Access Partnership (North Belfast - or Graduate Intern Programme (BAPs Citywide), all of which worked in partnership with public sector employers.

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Do you have any final comments or suggestions?

- BESF is a significant opportunity for Belfast to apply a coordinated approach to meeting the shared economic needs of citizens with the needs of business for sustainable growth. BAPs recommends that BESF builds on good practice and points to the learning from tried and tested programmes such as HEP - EAP & GIP as proven employability and skills escalator models that support business while promoting social inclusion. Additionally, BAPs suggest the BESF need to incorporate more integrated working to produce school - community - business partnerships to bridge learning gaps and progression into employment, especially for those most disadvantaged in society.

### Consultation

We want to get your views on the proposed content and actions of the Employability and Skills Framework.

Please note that all responses will be treated as public, and may be published on this website. If you do not want your response to be used in this way, or if you would prefer it to be used anonymously, please indicate this when responding.

### Confidentiality and access to information legislation

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with access to information legislation: these are chiefly the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice (section 45) with which public authorities must comply and deals with amongst other things, obligations of confidence. In view of this, it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information, we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on Belfast City Council.

For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office on 028 9026 9380 or email [ni@ico.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ni@ico.gsi.gov.uk) (or see their website at [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)).