National Skills Networks and Academies

A FRAMEWORK FOR BUILDING AND PROMOTING QUALITY IN THIRD SECTOR SKILLS

Introduction

January 2011

An Introduction

The third sector is being asked to deliver more impact with less resource so we'll have to make more of what we already have. Skills – Third sector believes that with better mapping of quality learning resources, better sharing of the knowledge we have and an independent quality framework, there's a better chance of meeting this challenge.

After extensive research and consultation with the sector, we identified these four priority skills areas where the biggest skills gaps exist and where improvements could lead to greatest impact:

- **governance and leadership**
- **skills for business**
- **managing volunteers**
- **measuring effectiveness and impact**

Across these four themes, it's more important now than ever before that we can pinpoint exactly the learning we need. Here's an outline of our proposed solution:

A project built on strong principles

- Governance and leadership that's fit for purpose and outcome focused
- Multiple partners who can understand and reflect the range of user requirements
- Formal partners and informal collaborators
- No and low-cost solutions wherever possible. This should encourage sharing of resources and responsibility and help us keep the networks going
- Not re-creating what already exists
- Clear, consistent and impactful promotion

Access and support for learning that's tailored to users' needs:

- Focused content
- Sensitive to the working environment of the learner
- Accepting that people learn in different ways
- Good quality online resources including innovations that work
- People learning from people
- Delivered in the right sized chunks

A framework for independent assessment of quality:

- A directory of resources with a range of independent quality indicators
- Involving users in quality assessment
- Relevant qualifications and awards from a range of providers
- Endorsement for training, apprenticeships and peer to peer learning

Linking people with each other and with the learning they need:

- Active and functional networks that keep people engaged and encourage learning and support
- A skills bank linking volunteers and paid people with organisations
- A mix of online and offline activity
- Open networks where all are welcome
- Secure networks for controlled groups and paid membership
- A community of users from the local to the national level
- Organisations of all types and sizes

Relevant learning materials collated from a wide community of users and providers

- News, policy analysis and short reports
- Books, training materials and e-learning
- Signposting events and events building tools
- Surveying tools for informing policy

Some organisations have already joined us on our journey to make these networks and academies a reality and work is under way to draw in others. If you're interested or have feedback for us then please send it to us at graham.leigh@skills-thirdsector.org.uk