

## **NWDA Proposal – Executive Summary**

The NW HLS project has two main areas of activity brokerage support and the development and delivery of new demand led higher level skills provision. The Brokerage support activity will aim to integrate higher level skills with the Train to Gain skills brokerage in three sectors: Biomedical, Food and Drink and Energy and Environmental Technologies. This will build on the work already undertaken through the NW Higher Level Skills Pathfinder which is working on integration with Train to Gain in the Construction, Advanced Engineering and Materials, Business and Professional Services and Digital and Creative Industries sectors. To achieve this aim the project will employ three Specialist HE Advisors who will work with Train to Gain Skills Brokers as a source of expert knowledge on the higher level skills offer in these four areas. There is a recognised lack of expertise and knowledge relating to HE within the current Skills Brokers and therefore access to expert support is considered highly valuable to the Train to Gain team. The Specialist Advisors will provide support for the brokers when they encounter a business with a higher level skills need, they will assist the brokers in identifying any solutions to the need, which are already available from the higher level skills providers in the region, if no solution is currently available then the advisors will help the broker to liaise with provider to source new provision and to help build the relationship between the business and the provider to develop the new provision to meet the employer's needs and demand. The Specialist Advisors will also support other intermediaries with higher level skills referrals such as Sector Skills Councils, Regional Cluster Organisations etc...

The development and delivery of new demand led higher level skills provision is the other main activity to be undertaken through the project. This will involve the development of sector panels (in the three RES sectors) comprising SSCs, LSC, NWDA, Regional Cluster Organisations and project staff who will work together to utilise SSC research and data and regional LMI to identify the higher level skills needs for each of the sectors (both prescribed and non-prescribed HE). The needs identified will be the needs as detailed by private sector employers, articulated through the employer representative organisations, such as SSCs or RCOs. These needs will then be used to issue a call for proposals from HEIs, FECs and WBL providers to develop provision which meets these needs and involves employers in the design, development and delivery of the new provision. The proposals received will be assessed by the sector panel against a number of criteria including the needs identified, the level of employer engagement, the sustainability of the development and the cost and therefore the value for money of the development. Successful proposals will then be funded by the development funding requested in this application. The Specialist Advisors will work with providers to support them in the development of proposals and to help broker relationships with the relevant SSCs to help build employer links.

Work is already underway on the development and delivery of HE provision in four sectors (Construction, Advanced Engineering and Materials, Business and Professional Services and Digital and Creative Industries) through the HEFCE funded Higher Level Skills Pathfinder. However, the pathfinder is only able to fund HEFCE funded HE provision (i.e. prescribed HE within HEIs and FECs). Therefore this project will use the existing sector panels in these four sectors to identify needs for non-prescribed HE (e.g. NVQs, Professional Qualifications, non-accredited provision) and will ask providers to respond to these as above, other skills needs already identified but not met through existing funding will also be considered. Successful proposals from all higher level skills providers will be eligible for funding from the development funding part of this project.

The NWDA funding will also be used to contribute to the costs of a Project Director, Senior Officer and Administrator (a match funding contribution to these costs is provided by the HEFCE funding for the NW Higher Level Skills Pathfinder). This wider project team will ensure the smooth running of all activity and the overall management of the project, the marketing of activity across providers, partners and intermediaries (Brokers), the achievement of the required outputs and outcomes and the spend of the funding. These members of staff will work across this project and the NW Higher Level Skills Pathfinder and will ensure integration of activities while avoiding duplication of work to ensure the maximum benefits are achieved from both funding streams. The funding will also cover the full costs of all HLS project and HLS Pathfinder staff from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010. The HLS Pathfinder funding ends on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009, however, these staff will be required to be retained until the end of the HLS project to ensure the achievement of outcomes and outputs across all sectors.