
Economic Wellbeing Pillar: Competiveness, Employment, Education & Skills (CEES)

Thematic Working Group (TWG): Workshop 2, 10 June 2016

Attendees: Joanne Wallace- **Wallace Consulting**, Kim Nesbitt- **ALMAC**, Eileen Stewart- **Armagh Business Centre**, Ciaran Cunningham- **Banbridge Enterprise Centre**, Patricia Devine- **Invest NI**, Valerie Madill - **Moy Park**, Heather Kavanagh- **SRC**, Jim Cunningham- **SRC**, Carol Fitzsimons- **Young Enterprise**, Shirley Devlin- **Invest NI**, Ciara Kilpatrick- **Invest NI**, Geraldine Lawless – **TADA Rural Support Networks**, Bredan McCann – **TADA Rural Support Networks**, Denise Cornett – **People 1st**.

ABC Council- Nicola Wilson, Sarah-Jane McDonald, Paul Kavanagh, Elaine McAlinden, Natalie Ronaldson, Diane Stinson, Lynn Morrow, Elaine Gillespie, Damien McEvoy, Cllr Jonathan Buckley, Michelle Markey

Apologies: Michael Graham- **CCMS**, Shane Campbell- **ICBAN**, Rosemary Hughes- **ABC**, Paul Crooks- **EANI**, Ciaran Tipping – **ABC**, Niall Drew – **ABC**, Damian Mulligan – **ABC**, Catherine McNeill – **ABC**, Raymond Sloan – **SRC**, David Vint – **SRC**, Julie English – **Reed In Partnership**, Jerome Burns – **DARD**, Claire Gordon – **Business in the Community**, Ray Gillbery - **EANI**, Christina Canning – **Drumbeg North & South**, Joanne Shortall – **Drumbeg North & South**, Claire Toner – **ABC**, Cathy O’Kane – **ABC**, Paul Crooks – **EANI**

1. Welcome & Introduction

Patricia Devine, Invest NI welcomed members as Chair of the CEES TWG.

2. Baseline Statistics

Jennifer Doak, NISRA updated the baseline report as per Workshop 1 requests:

- ABC Skills Barometer to include STEM skills gaps;
- Broadband coverage

Outcome: TWG members agreed that the draft report reflected the current situation.

3. Workshop 1 Report

Joanne Wallace, Wallace Consulting provided a recap of the issues and priorities agreed at the previous session. The three inter-linked priorities were

- Tackling the Skills Deficit;
- Building Career Pathways; and
- Promoting & Supporting Entrepreneurship.

Joanne Wallace suggested amalgamating two priorities “Tackling the Skills Deficit” and “Building Career Pathways” but the related outcomes and actions should reflect the dual focus. There was divided support for this (i.e. 2 Tables wished to keep these priorities separate & 2 wished to amalgamate but have separate actions).

Long-term outcomes for each priority were presented based upon the outputs of Workshop 1:

Priority	Draft Long-term Outcome	Agreed Long-term Outcome
Tackle the Skills Deficit	The skills of the resident workforce are aligned to current and projected business need	The skills of the resident ¹ workforce are aligned to current and projected business need
Build Career Pathways	The potential workforce can identify valued pathways to employment which reflect their own interests and skills, as well as the needs of the local economy	The potential workforce can access clear & relevant pathways to employment which reflect their own interests and skills, as well as the needs of the local economy
Promote & Support Entrepreneurship	ABC is recognised as a Centre of Excellence for Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Investment	ABC is recognised as a Centre of Excellence for Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Investment

The Vision, based upon member proposals at Workshop 1 was agreed as:

“We have a thriving and prosperous economy, underpinned by the skills of our people and our dynamic industries which attract investment and opportunities for growth:

ABC is the Borough that’s open, ready and equipped for business.”

Outcome: We will keep the priorities separate for now but will potentially revisit.

4. Short- and Medium-Term Outcomes

Joanne presented draft short- and medium-term outcomes. The following suggestions have been drafted on the basis of the discussions (see Table 4.1).

Outcome: TWG members to discuss & agree proposed Short-, Medium- & Long-term outcomes at Workshop 3.

¹ We are primarily concerned with upskilling those living within ABC

Table 4.1 **Priorities & Outcomes**

Priority	Short-term (0-5 years)	Medium-term (6-9 years)	Long-term (10-15 years)
Tackle the Skills Deficit	Partners understand current & future skills needs & are addressing these through private, public, community & voluntary sector partnership	Targeted initiatives address gaps in sectors which have identified/projected skills shortages in order to meet and maximise business growth & prosperity	The skills of the resident workforce are aligned to current & projected business need
Build Career Pathways	There is increased awareness & knowledge around existing and future business needs, local employment & enterprise opportunities & the importance of life-long learning	More individuals are attaining employability & job-specific skills, obtaining practical work experience & are supported to progress along their chosen career route	The potential workforce has access to clear & relevant pathways to employment which reflect their own interests & skills, as well as the needs of the local economy
Promote & Support Entrepreneurship	The Borough provides a welcoming, collaborative & supportive environment for business start-ups, growth, innovation & attracting FDI	There is a diverse stock of thriving local & non-local businesses, which are responsive to market demand & generate improved & higher value employment opportunities	ABC is recognised as a Centre of Excellence for Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Investment

5. SWOT Analysis

Nicola Wilson, ABC Borough Council provided a snapshot of partner activities relevant to the priorities. Members conducted a SWOT analysis on each priority to inform action planning.

Table 5.1: SKILLS DEFICIT	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive businesses with good links & networks (also to Council); • Good spread of sectors represented; • Innovative businesses (e.g. food sector); • High working age population; • Excellent training providers & education establishments with links to FE & HE; • Many good practice examples (e.g. SRC employability & employment models, Rural Entrepreneurship & Youth Programme); • Good partnership working between SRC, training providers, employers & community; • Council has provided links for TADA with smaller employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 4 qualification gaps; • Not using networks to full potential – uncertainty around who does what; • Funding for small numbers on training programmes & age restrictions (focus on U25s); • Skills within community aren't being utilised; • Lack of connectivity (e.g. transport, information & social networks); • Restrictions regarding Neighbourhood Renewal Area boundaries & eligibility for funding; • Over reliance on third party funding; • The needs of some groups are unmet (e.g. people with disabilities)
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment & Skills Forum should engage all providers & employers, develop an action plan & obtain buy-in; • To gather evidence on skills gaps needs & create relevant interventions; • People moving into the Borough bring new skills; • Potential training through RDP; • Potential to identify emerging employment sectors through skills analysis (e.g. Food Science); • Encourage peer mentoring; • Create business cluster training; • Expand successful programmes; • Maximise potential of Chamber of Commerce as a route to businesses; • Provide training in different formats to make it more accessible; • Opportunities to target 25 years+ to reskill, upskill & fill higher level jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not utilising the information in the Skills Barometer to plan – ad hoc approach; • Employer focus on academic qualifications rather than skills & apprenticeships; • Lack of funding; • Too many statutory sector regulations/bureaucracy for small businesses; • Zero hour contracts; • People leaving the Borough for employment; • Lack of refreshing employee skills creates skills gaps

Table 5.2: CAREER PATHWAYS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SRC Careers Team are open to public & provide support with business plans;• DART model provides rural transport;• Good practice includes Skills Solution Programme (existing staff upskilled), Enterprise Allowance Scheme;• Area Learning Communities established in Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon;• Strong links within community & voluntary sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor advertising of training opportunities;• Lack of quality business input at careers fairs;• Availability of suitable training venues;• No university presence in Borough;• Lack of connectivity between primary, secondary & third level education providers;• Lack of value placed on vocational routes compared to academic qualifications
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand DART transport model;• Careers advisors in schools should team-up with employers;• Develop clear pathways that are recognised by employers;• Raise awareness of skills gaps with education system, employers & parents;• Develop practical career based route maps to employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools and or employers don't engage;• Competitiveness of training providers;• Affordability of Council room hire;• Brexit could potentially affect funding levels & relationships with Europe

Table 5.3: ENTREPRENEURSHIP	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong entrepreneurial culture; • High level of micro-businesses; • Good start-up provision; • High performing sectors; • World class companies & good role models; • Strong relationships with Invest NI • Willingness to work together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disjointed approach; • High level of business deaths; • Lack of awareness of existing support; • Little focus on pre-start - need to remove barriers to start-up & growth (information, skills, confidence); • Gaps in post-start-up support; • Failure to meet market demand through diversifying/specialising; • Poor broadband coverage, particularly in rural areas; • Poor transport networks to include lack of railway link to Craigavon
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to work more collaboratively; • Lower rates of Corporation Tax; • Promote successes (e.g. mentors, champions) • Council's new responsibility for planning; • Forum development (e.g. Employability & skills, digital, life sciences) • Seek collaborative funding; • Potential to work more closely with schools & showcase entrepreneurship; • Social enterprise development; • Develop supply chains; • Make use of vacant properties – pop-up shops; • Extend good practice models (e.g. Enterprise Firms, Princes Trust Mentoring Scheme, Business Engagement Programme, Food Heartland Forum, Rural Entrepreneurship & Youth Programme) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of aspiration; • High business rates & rents; • Lack of access to finance; • Need for match funding; • Skills gaps inhibit business growth; • Decline of town centres (vacancy rates, parking facilities); • Short-term funding for enterprise; • Brexit/currency fluctuation/corporation tax (but also an opportunity)

6. Proposed Actions, Beneficiaries & Indicators

Members discussed potential actions for each priority. These are presented on the following pages.

Outcome: TWG members to discuss & agree proposed activity tables at Workshop 3.

Table 6.1: Tackle the Skills Deficit		
Proposed Actions	Detail	Outcomes
1	Establish multi-sectoral Employment & Skills Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners understand current & future skills needs & are addressing these through private, public, community & voluntary sector partnership; Targeted initiatives address gaps in sectors which have identified/projected skills shortages in order to meet and maximise business growth & prosperity; The skills of the resident workforce are aligned to current & projected business need
2	Stakeholder information/engagement process	
3	Develop collaborative initiatives to address skills deficits in target sectors	
4	Communicate & celebrate successes	
Target Beneficiaries		Potential Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils/Students, graduates, unemployed, parents; Employers & employees; Teachers/careers advisors; Disadvantaged/marginalised groups (incl. rural/S75) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools, HE & FE providers; Business sector/employers Community & voluntary groups; Employment agencies (e.g. USEL, Jobs & Benefits) & training providers; ABC Council, Education Authority
		Potential Indicators
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target groups are more knowledgeable about existing/future skills needs & potential impact upon business growth; Employers are more confident that their current/future skills needs will be met; <vacancies in target sectors; Increased access to work experience, apprenticeships & on-the-job training; >L3-6 qualifications & <no/below L4 qualifications

Table 6.2: Build Career Pathways			
Proposed Actions		Detail	Outcomes
1	Establish sub-group of Employability & Skills Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope out existing education, business & enterprise links & collaborations, identify gaps, good practice & develop action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is increased awareness & knowledge around existing and future business needs, local employment & enterprise opportunities & the importance of life-long learning; • More individuals are attaining employability & job-specific skills, obtaining practical work experience & are supported to progress along their chosen career route; • The potential workforce has access to clear & relevant pathways to employment which reflect their own interests & skills, as well as the needs of the local economy
2	Initiate stakeholder information/engagement process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of existing & future skills needs & potential impact upon employment outcomes; • Raise awareness of the variety of career pathways & opportunities within Borough - addressing perceived stigma around non-academic routes (e.g. careers fairs, use of role models). 	
3	Work in partnership to open up career pathways & improve employment outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and/or disseminate career route maps; • Influence the relevance & quality of careers advice in schools through improving knowledge of skills gaps, local training & employment opportunities & career options; • Open-up practical work experience, apprenticeships & vocational training opportunities; • Work with schools to develop a culture of entrepreneurship from primary school onwards 	
4	Develop collaborative initiatives to improve employment readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reward & publicise good practice through case-studies & awards; • Work to embed employability & transferrable skills required for enterprise & employment as a core part of the school curriculum (e.g. new subject area); • Inform initiatives to reskill & support the unemployed, build confidence & encourage flexibility to meet business needs 	
Target Beneficiaries		Potential Partners	Potential Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils/Students, graduates, unemployed (incl. NEETS), parents; • Employers & employees; • Teachers/ careers advisors; • Disadvantaged/marginalised groups (incl. rural/S75) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools, HE & FE providers; • Business sector/employers • Community & voluntary groups; • Employment agencies (e.g. USEL, Jobs & Benefits) & training providers; • ABC Council, Education Authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • >Achieving 2+ A levels or equivalent; • > STEM related qualifications (L4+); • >School leavers achieving 5+ GCSEs at Grade C; • Target groups have increased awareness of the variety of employment pathways & local opportunities; • Increased awareness of employer needs & job readiness; • Target groups are more positive towards vocational training; • >L3-6 qualifications & <no/below L4 qualifications

Table 6.3: Promote & Support Entrepreneurship			
Proposed Actions		Detail	Outcomes
1	Establish Enterprise Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope the sector, identify needs & available support, good practice & gaps, develop action plan & seek funding; • Identify potential growth sectors (e.g. digital, services) & develop strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Borough provides a welcoming, collaborative & supportive environment for business start-ups, growth, innovation & attracting FDI; • There is a diverse stock of thriving local & non-local businesses, which are responsive to market demand & generate improved & higher value employment opportunities; • ABC is recognised as a Centre of Excellence for Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Investment
2	Inform, coordinate & promote initiatives to kick-start enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support needs-based pre-start & start-up mentoring, training & signposting (e.g. based on Business Engagement Programme, knowledge exchanges); • Inform a Business Re-birth Programme – highlighting business successes & failures to enhance learning & resilience; • Promote social economy as a route to enterprise (e.g. SRC Enterprise Firms); • Encourage & enable joint ventures between schools & business to foster creativity & entrepreneurs (e.g. role models, product development & sales) 	
3	Inform, coordinate & promote initiatives to attract investment & develop, protect & grow businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve new & at risk businesses' access to support; • Coordinate & market the types of business support available & how to access it (target new, at risk & potential growth businesses); • Establish a collaborative business network (e.g. Sectoral champions, B2B support & mentoring, supply chain, training, information) 	
4	Help create the conditions for investment & growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internally & externally promote & market ABC's assets; • Collaborative FDI action plan (sustained targeting, education, upskilling & support to attract & sustain FDI); • Lobby for increased & improved broadband coverage (extend pilot scheme); • Maximise Local Authority Powers of Planning, Social Enterprise & Youth Entrepreneurship to full advantage; • Ensure internal policy & processes promote entrepreneurship 	
Target Beneficiaries		Potential Partners	Potential Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils/Students, graduates, unemployed, employees; • Disadvantaged/marginalised groups (incl. rural/S75); • Employers/Business sector (incl. micro-business, those in decline) & Growth sectors; • Teachers/Careers advisors; 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses • Business owners (e.g. role models, mentors); • Schools, HE & FE providers; • Community & voluntary groups; • Agencies (e.g. USEL, Jobs & Benefits); • Banks/investors; • Invest NI, ABC Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • >Business start-up rate • >Business survival rate • <unemployment • >Annual earnings • >Growth in key sectors • >GVA & >Inward investment • >Broadband coverage

7. Parked Issues

These were raised as important and will be explored in subsequent TWG sessions and/or discussed under the Environmental and Social Wellbeing Pillars.

- Breakdown of migrant employment in the Borough – recognition as potential skilled workforce;
- Reason behind business deaths;
- Need infrastructure for entrepreneurship (i.e. Lack of broadband connectivity, appropriate size units etc);
- Poor public transport to support job mobility;
- Academic underachievement & economic inactivity – need to understand why & create innovative routes to employment (links to community organisations & support mechanisms);
- Ageing population is a resource (e.g. volunteering, business mentoring, intergenerational contact, community development).

8. Next Steps

The remaining Workshops are scheduled as follows:

- The 3rd Workshop will be on Thursday 4 August, 2016: 9:30-1pm (venue TBC).

Workshop 3 will focus on:

- Revisions/refinements to draft Activity Tables;
- Identification of Lead Partners;
- Complementarity with other Pillars & TWGs;
- Links to Cross-cutting themes.