

NWWDF

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What is the *NWWDF*?

- Cross border initiative
- Goal to deliver to businesses the employee skills they need
 - To include new entrants and upskilling the existing workforce

What's going well for the NWWDF

- 10 general meetings so far
- Numerous sub-committee meetings
- Cross border and specifically public sector cooperation excellent
- Everyone that is engaged wants to help

Individual Sector specific employer meetings have occurred

- Meetings have been held with numerous sectors to determine their employee training needs:
 - Hospitality/Tourism
 - Call Centers
 - Financial Services
 - ICT
 - Creative Industries
 - Construction

Some Employer Issues

- Many, many very small private sector employers ~ 98% with fewer than 10 employees
- Small employers have trouble releasing members of staff for training as work coverage is thin or training schedules do not fit release requirements e.g. Hospitality
- Training can be expensive and some employers wonder if they get a proper return
- In a weak economy most employers must concentrate on survival today and are less focused on future needs like employee-management development
- Some new entrants with NVQs lack the practical knowledge that the Apprenticeship programs used to provide

Some Employer Issues (continued)

- Some employers struggle to hire enough people due to the sector reputation (unsocial hours, low starting wages) This would include most of the growth sectors out there now... Tourism, Hospitality, Call Centers, ICT, Financial Services
- Many new entrants to the workforce do not have Basic IT, customer care, interpersonal skills, leadership, business/work expectations, literacy, numeracy, and teamwork skills
 - *NWWDF* are encouraging small companies to liaise with other companies in their sector in order to create large enough classes to help defray their costs and for the NWRC to provide custom scheduling and class content around their needs

Other Issues

- The large disengaged population in the NW
- Up to 60% of the disengaged from employment fail a basic literacy/numeracy test
- Estimate 2-3000 new jobs generated yearly in the DCC area
- We must get those disengaged from employment trained and re-engaged to supply sufficient numbers to fill employer needs for an educated staff
- *NWWDF* will work with Business in the Community and other interested employer groups to get re-engagement using “Bridge to Employment”

Career Guidance

- Training requested and received by students is not always relevant to the economic needs of the area
- *NWWDF* recommend a “social engineering” change to guide Primary and Secondary school students into the NW employment growth areas
 - Financial Services
 - Call Centers
 - ICT
 - Hospitality and Tourism
 - Construction
 - Health Care

STEM graduates are too few to fuel a “Knowledge Economy” and the economic regeneration wanted

- Too few students are taking or entering STEM curricula
- If we want a “Knowledge Economy” we have to guide kids into STEM areas
 - Lower fees or additional bursaries
- “Science-Technology as a career” campaign needs to start in the Primary schools
- Employers can do more
 - Seagate Young Innovators held annually in Belfast is the largest science fair on the Island
 - The Seagate “Real Science Fair” held at Lumen Christi gives Post-Primary students from over 15 schools access to professionals from over 20 companies
 - Seagate provides work experience to post-primary students through FOSEC

Miscellaneous

- Post Primary Schools have begun employability training
 - I recommend a metric to track their progress
- There is an acute lack of managers and management skills in almost all sectors stunting growth in some sectors
 - There is an abundance of available management training!
- Insufficient ICT professionals and again, too few students pursuing this curricula
 - DEL is actively pursuing this task through the SSC, e-Skills programs

Actions

- The WDF have done local radio and newspaper stories trying to encourage people to take up Call Center and Financial Services careers, highlighting the job availability, training and career advancement opportunities
- NWRC has facilitated special classes at the request of the Hospitality, Tourism and Manufacturing sectors
- The NWRC, LIT and FAS are using their resources to help employers and they have capacity to do more if asked by employers
- This is a complicated problem and requires time to resolve...**there are no quick fixes**