



Strategic Plan 2008–2013

Chair foreword

Recognising the challenges posed by a global economy many UK employers are now showing a great hunger to develop their staff. To meet this demand a skills system is needed that attracts the right people to our sector and provides them with flexible and high quality skills.

Employers in our sector have never had a better chance to make demand-led training provision a reality. For SummitSkills that means the responsibility to ensure we are accurately articulating the needs of building services engineering (BSE) companies. Defining demand is not simply what employers say they want, but must be supported with evidence of what employers actually need and use.

SummitSkills is an independent organisation; however it does not function autonomously. We represent the needs of BSE employers as well as aligning those needs and priorities to those of our stakeholders. Our success will be measured by the extent to which we can truly represent those needs and make the sector more profitable and productive.

The next five years presents a period of significant challenge and opportunity. It is the period that will see the implementation of the suggestions made in the Leitch Review and also the skills strategies of the devolved administrations. The sector needs to ensure it embraces those challenges and seizes the opportunities to produce the skilled workforce it needs to succeed.

The end of 2008 draws my term as SummitSkills' Chair to a close; however I introduce this strategic plan as a gateway to the organisation's future work and an insight into how we think the BSE sector needs to respond to these complex challenges, both now and in the future.

Simon Bartley,
Chair



Introduction by the Chief Executive

This document describes what SummitSkills plans to achieve between 2008 and 2013. It was developed in recognition of work already undertaken and the landscape in which we will be working over the forthcoming years. It sets out our vision for the sector across the UK and our role in taking the skills agenda forward.

Our core objectives remain at our heart. Employer engagement, standards, qualifications and labour market intelligence are essential to developing a highly skilled workforce for the building services engineering sector. National occupational standards specifically continue to be important. Increasingly, employers are

realising that good standards are not just the basis for relevant qualifications, but a valuable tool for effective and up to date operational management. Also important are economically valuable qualifications, which are the basis of a highly productive sector and therefore deserve public funding.

As an organisation with UK-wide responsibilities, SummitSkills has to balance its work to address the specific needs of individual parts of the UK. This plan recognises the important differences among the devolved administrations and the need to respond to them in innovative ways. We look forward to working with our partners in the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills, the Department of Employment & Learning in Northern Ireland, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Assembly

Government to achieve our mutual goals.

This document provides a clear picture of SummitSkills' role and ambitions over the next five years. We will carry out this work in an open and accountable way and welcome any comments and feedback on the plan.

Keith Marshall OBE,
Chief Executive



About this strategic plan

This is the second SummitSkills strategic plan. It sets out the organisation's main objectives for 2008–13.

The plan is strategic in the sense that it is a high level document that demonstrates our vision and summarises **what we do** and **why**. Our intention is that our partners and stakeholders can understand how SummitSkills works and the reasons for that work.

In this document we present **six broad strategic objectives and goals**. Working to those objectives, which relate not only to the external impact of SummitSkills but also the evolution of the organisation, will allow us to achieve success over the next five years.

Also in this document we look at the **values** underpinning our work and how we will **deliver and evaluate** the plan.

About SummitSkills

SummitSkills was licensed in December 2003 as the Sector Skills Council for building services engineering.

We work with employers and other key partners throughout the whole of the UK to ensure that all those who work in the sector are equipped with the right skills, at the right levels, to enable them to be productive, effective and efficient. SummitSkills has also been appointed by Government to represent the views of the sector's employers, to ensure that building services engineering businesses have a powerful voice when lobbying for change.

Board members

The SummitSkills board comprises employers from across the building services engineering spectrum to represent the different industries and sizes of businesses in the sector. The board meets quarterly to agree and oversee SummitSkills' overall direction and financial viability. Board members are appointed via a nominations committee for a three year term.

Committees

Key strands of the board's work are taken forward by dedicated committees that cover management; nominations and governance; finance and audit and finally remuneration.

Key Dimensions

There are three dimensions to SummitSkills' work which are fully integrated into our work programmes:

– every nation

We work across all four countries of the UK, with operations managers in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, as well as each English region. In each country, groups of key employers and partners direct and monitor our work through the Sector Skills Agreement implementation groups.

– every industry

All strands of the sector are represented by Interest Groups which report to the management committee and the board. These groups include employers and partners that represent the skills demand of their industry within the BSE sector.

This plan is supported by two other documents that cover more fully our work at a logistical level:

- **3-year business plan:** due to the nature of skills development, much of SummitSkills' activity takes place over a number of years. The three-year business plan presents a wider overview of current activity that includes short, medium and long-term milestones and puts larger projects into context.
- **1-year operating plan:** our one year plan is our immediate 'working document' that maps out project specific activity for the twelve months and provides a level of detail that is unnecessary for the wider business or strategic plans.

Key facts

- SummitSkills is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee.
 - Our core stakeholders are
 - Association of Plumbing & Heating Contractors
 - Heating & Ventilating Contractors' Association
 - Electrical Contractors' Association
 - Scottish & Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers' Federation
 - SELECT
- Representatives from each of these bodies attend SummitSkills' board meetings.
- Most of SummitSkills' work is financed by Government through the UK Commission for Employment and Skills.
 - SummitSkills has around 40 staff and a head office in Milton Keynes.

– every level

SummitSkills engages with, works on behalf of and offers practical assistance to people working at all levels within the sector, from craft operatives, technicians and first line supervisors through to senior managers and consultants.

The building services engineering sector – background

Building services engineering permeates the whole of society and industry in the United Kingdom. It plays a major role in the areas of sustainable development and energy efficiency. Without the activities of this sector, the whole of the UK economy would cease to function.

However, the sector is characterised by small to medium enterprises (SMEs), micro and sole trader companies which tend to be very reactive to change, rather than proactively anticipating and planning for change and skills needs associated with this. But the pace of both technological change and globalisation will significantly alter the way business is undertaken in the future.

To remain competitive in the longer term, significant advances in skills development are needed across the sector.

In the work undertaken for our Sector Skills Agreement, SummitSkills has been able to provide a clear picture of the BSE sector as a whole, its external influences, key skills challenges and the current training provision available to it.



The issues facing the sector

Only a quarter of the sector feels their company is at threat from **globalisation** and overseas competition. However in reality, companies may experience rivalry from abroad for work in home markets due to open tendering systems. This lack of concern may leave the sector vulnerable once foreign competition becomes established.

The drive to reduce carbon emissions is one of the single biggest factors currently affecting the sector. The UK currently does not have the capacity to respond to environmental technology demands from government, due to the lack of installation skills amongst the craft industries.

Training is needed to meet **skills deficiencies in environmental and renewable technologies** across all the industries within the sector where current levels of activity are rising quickly and, it is envisaged, will rise further as the UK approaches the 2010 Kyoto performance assessment.

Government regulation is causing problems for businesses, with competence schemes and issues around bureaucracy, red tape and increased costs often cited. There is also concern about insufficient inspection of competence cards taking place, leading some of the sector's companies to question their relevance or to continue with renewal.

Absence of current and future skills planning across the sector makes it reactive to emerging markets such as renewables rather than proactive, resulting in a weakened capacity to meet future client demands.

There is a **lack of any robust form of management focus** in relation to competitor analysis, competitive advantage and formal benchmarking. This is preventing strategic thinking and is contributing to productivity issues in businesses within the sector.

The basic skills of new entrants to the sector and the **IT skills of experienced staff** need to be improved to ensure productivity returns are maximised from capital investment in new technology.

Engagement in research, particularly with Higher Education Institutions, is needed to increase the innovative 'value-added' nature of what the sector offers in products and services to clients.

Key facts

- The UK's building services engineering sector had an annual turnover of £16.2bn (2005), rising to £17bn in 2007, employs over 600,000 individuals in over 60,000 businesses.
- The sector represents the following core industries:
 - air conditioning and refrigeration
 - electrotechnical
 - heating and ventilating
 - plumbing
 - building services engineering consultancy.
- Over 90% of businesses employ fewer than 10 people.



Our vision, mission and objectives

Our **strategic vision** is to have

“World class skills that drive performance in a profitable and competitive sector.”

To achieve our vision for the sector we will deliver our **mission** which is

“To influence and promote investment in skills at all levels.”

Our commitment to work in partnership with funders, employers, key stakeholders and providers is central to realising our vision and delivering our mission. We recognise the global context of the sector, government policy aims and priorities, the need of employers for changing skills to compete in a global economy and the needs of our stakeholders. We fully expect the demands of this wide range of stakeholders to change through the coming decade and believe this plan prepares us to respond to these requirements in the most effective way.



Introducing our six strategic objectives:

To achieve our mission and provide a clear understanding of the main and important areas of work on which SummitSkills needs to concentrate, we are now guided by six strategic objectives which are relevant and achievable.

In developing these objectives we ensured that they mirror and complement the views of Leitch and those of the Northern Ireland Executive, Scottish Government and Welsh Assembly on the role of a Sector Skills Council.

- 1 Employer engagement:** to engage with employers and individuals to promote the benefit of skills development
- 2 Offering expertise, safeguarding standards:** to be the authoritative voice of the sector in defining future skills needs

- 3 Enhancing quality and delivery:** to ensure the supply of people, skills and qualifications is employer-led
- 4 Raising ambition:** to raise employer ambition and investment in skills and to champion the sector's skills agenda
- 5 Effectiveness and evolution:** to continuously develop the capacity and capability of our organisation, using our resources efficiently and effectively.
- 6 Partnership approach:** to forge effective partnerships to deliver these objectives.

In the eight pages to follow, we outline each of these objectives and explain why these areas are important, how SummitSkills plans to approach them, how success will be measured and how we will deliver and evaluate the overall plan.

Strategic objective: Employer engagement

To engage with employers and individuals to promote the benefit of skills development



Why are we doing this?

In a world of rapid economic and technological change, skills are increasingly vital to the success of people, businesses and communities. Investment in skills is investment in our future. The skills challenge facing UK employers could not be more stark. The Confederation of British Industry forecasts that 75% of all jobs will require level 3 skills by 2012, but today just 50% of the workforce is qualified to this level.

The UK is the 4th largest economy in the world, but ranked only 18th in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per head and 22nd in terms of educational attainment by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This demonstrates that part of the productivity gap is the relatively poor skill levels of the UK workforce.

Not enough training is taking place by employers. Now is the time to embed the value of skills and skills development as it has never been done before. We need employers to take responsibility for the skills of their employees, in order for them to benefit from the increased productivity and profitability that investment in skills will deliver.

“The more employers that participate, the greater the success and benefit to business.”

Kevin McCallister, CHN Group



What's the plan?

Effective employer engagement by SummitSkills has two immediate goals:

- to raise awareness of and investment in the skills agenda by employers and
- to ensure that SummitSkills' activities reflect employer needs.

Through its **detailed engagement strategy** SummitSkills will listen and talk to employers of all sizes, across the whole of the UK, on a regular basis, to better understand their business challenges and changing skills needs. Using the outcomes of this two-way dialogue with employers we can speak with real authority about skills on their behalf.

Effective engagement was the backbone of the Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) process and will now continue in a different way. The implementation phase of the project, and specifically the **SSA implementation groups**, will involve employers in delivering key actions, to bring about change for themselves and the sector.

SummitSkills will also continue to seek employer expertise through **working groups and consultations**, where business views are vital to influence policy and develop future strategies.

Primary research and intelligence activities will also be developed, where employers are surveyed by post, telephone or face-to-face to understand their current business, competitiveness and skills issues.



What are the measures of success?

Effective engagement strategies will enable SummitSkills to continuously reach high percentages of employers and evidence their contribution to the various activities of the organisation both at regional and national level.

SummitSkills' identity with employers in the sector will grow as they benefit from the delivery of the SSA and increasingly engage with the skills system across the UK.

Employers will demonstrate increasing confidence and support for SummitSkills through their involvement with the organisation and its work, which they will recognise as making a real difference in addressing the skills challenges for the sector.



Strategic objective: Offering expertise, safeguarding standards

To be the authoritative voice of the sector in defining future skill needs



Why are we doing this?

Through the Government's desire to create a demand-led skills system, employers have been given the opportunity to exert real leverage and decision-making over both the content and delivery of skills. To capitalise on this opportunity, we need to strengthen the employer voice at the heart of the skills agenda.

It is SummitSkills' responsibility to gain the confidence of employers and clearly articulate their needs to wider stakeholders and government. Using this knowledge, SummitSkills will take a leading role in the reform and development of vocational qualifications to meet the sector's changing requirements.



What's the plan?

Our Sector Skills Agreement was the beginning of a research and employer engagement process to gain an understanding of the sector's requirements. Under this objective, SummitSkills will take the SSA work to the next stage and further enhance its labour market intelligence (LMI) and qualitative employer feedback.

We will continue to **undertake active labour market research** to understand the changing context within which the sector operates, and implement a **research strategy to seek regular employer feedback**.

Our cyclic research activity will provide data comparisons both at national and regional level by industry and incorporate secondary data sources where appropriate. This data will be contextualised with wider sector analysis and insight, making it **relevant, engaging and easy to understand**. The research will be widely disseminated in new attractive and innovative ways and be used as authoritative data for the sector.

SummitSkills will use the intelligence gained to continuously assess and update the SSA and **influence the Government and its agencies to invest in skills** where the sector needs it most. The LMI and employer feedback demonstrated by SummitSkills will provide a clear evidence base for defining future skills needs.



What are the measures of success?

SummitSkills will be viewed by various policy makers as the respected voice of sector employers; our effective and challenging contributions will be activity sought to shape policy development across the four nations.

SummitSkills' research will be of the highest quality, having credibility with both sector employers, partners and external audiences.

Employers will use the LMI to effectively forecast their skills and training needs. Stakeholders and policy makers will use the same LMI to influence future government and sector policy. Funders and training providers will also use it to effectively plan training places for the sector.

Overall, SummitSkills will lobby persuasively to secure the necessary government support and funding for our sector both nationally and regionally.



"As an employer I want the reassurance of knowing that my employee is getting the correct training, to the highest standard possible. I believe this can be achieved by working with SummitSkills and its partners."

Ian Pattle, Heatplumb Supplies



Strategic objective: Enhancing quality and delivery

To ensure the supply of people, skills and qualifications is employer-led



Why are we doing this?

To effectively develop their staff, employers need a system that attracts the right people to the sector and gives them flexible and high quality skills in a way that fits their business requirements. They also need to be confident of the value of investing in skills and to view it as vital in helping to produce wealth and increased productivity. In order to attract and supply the people required by the sector both now and in the future, it is imperative that the education and training infrastructure delivers the skills at all levels to provide the lifeblood of the sector.



What's the plan?

Our work against this objective broadly falls over four key areas. These strands of work will be under continual review to ensure that they reflect sector needs and changes in good practice.

New entrants: positioning building services engineering as the sector of aspirational career choice for new entrants at all levels, providing a wider appreciation of the breadth of career opportunities available across the sector. This includes our work on areas such as the new Diplomas and Welsh Baccalaureate.

National Occupational Standards: developing, maintaining and updating the sector's national occupational standards and associated qualifications, in the context of the national qualification framework. These will be widely disseminated to employers across the sector so they can be used effectively in the workplace to underpin day-to-day HR practices.

Sector Qualifications Strategy: ensuring the future qualification structure for the sector is based on employer demand and only 'economically valuable' qualifications will receive public funding. SummitSkills will work with awarding bodies to develop vocational qualifications and approve those suitable for accreditation into the credit frameworks in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. In addition, SummitSkills will also advise on the population of the qualification and credit framework for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

Apprenticeship frameworks: In England, SummitSkills will approve apprenticeship frameworks which meet the agreed blueprint standard and are compatible with the SSA priorities, and develop frameworks to meet any gaps identified. In Scotland, SummitSkills will work with the employer trade associations to develop Modern Apprenticeship frameworks for external approval.



What are the measures of success?

The sector will view the implementation of the SSA as having changed the supply of training to a system which is truly demand-led by employers.

There will be regional mechanisms to ensure that: people's skills and knowledge are kept up to date; training provision is based on occupational standards; provision matches employer need, and the quality of learning and development provided to the sector is of the highest quality.

An evidenced reduction in the number of standalone technical certificates being delivered across the UK, supported by training provision diversifying to cover other areas of increasing importance including new technologies, management and leadership for the sector and upskilling of existing workers.

An increase in the number of apprenticeships supported by employers across the UK, a reduction in measurable skill gaps and a ready supply of high calibre new entrants to the sector.

Strategic objective: Raising ambition

To raise employer ambition and investment in skills and to champion the sector's skills agenda



Why are we doing this?

Employers already invest substantial time and resources in employee skills development – around £33 billion nationally.

However evidence suggests that this is not uniform across all sectors, with some employers being some way off the pace. Around 35% offer no training to employees, covering more than a quarter of the workforce, and a further 6% only offer health and safety training. The main barrier cited is that businesses do not see a need for more skills, with the pattern of training tending to concentrate on those already qualified, rather than those with no formal qualifications.

As the rest of the world continues to raise its skills game, if the UK is to achieve a skills base of quality in order to remain competitive, employers themselves will need to increase their investment in skills and target more effectively the areas for skills development.



What's the plan?

SummitSkills will work with employers to **clarify the current investment in skills development and training**

made by businesses. Many employers in the sector already make a significant contribution to staff training and development, especially supporting and mentoring apprentices and in-house training. But as yet this is not officially quantified and therefore not understood or recognised by Government. SummitSkills will develop and refine its work-in-progress cost models to place costs on employer support of this kind, which will be promoted to Government in order to help **achieve a sensible balance between employer and government contributions to training.**

The majority of employers are unwilling to pay more for training and need convincing about the business benefits of funding more training than they do currently. Through various strategies and tactics, as well as effective use of our latest sector LMI, SummitSkills will actively engage businesses into skills issues to **increase employer understanding and demand for skills development.**

By developing case studies that show the benefit of training and its contribution to increased productivity and profitability, SummitSkills will provide employers with the **proof that training pays.** Employers need to be encouraged to see training as an investment and not a cost, and that increased involvement with skills development will increase their productivity and competitiveness.

By understanding the needs of employers more clearly, SummitSkills will influence and lobby Government to ensure policy makers understand the skills issues of significance and importance to our sector.



What are the measures of success?

Employers in the sector will increasingly value technical and business training. This will be shown by an increased willingness to commit to training their staff both for new entrants as well as existing workers, and to fund training to greater levels. There will also be greater support from employers to recruit apprentices, particularly with SMEs and sole traders as they move to develop and increase their business.

Employers in the sector will also recognise the changes which must happen to improve skills and skills development and will be prepared to articulate this to policy makers, together with details of solutions they think could be effective.

"If you want your workforce to have the correct skills needed for the job, it's important to have a say in how skills and qualifications are developed."

John Noble, John Noble (Electrical Contractors)



Strategic objective: Effectiveness and evolution

To continuously develop the capacity and capability of our organisation, using our resources efficiently and effectively



Why are we doing this?

SummitSkills is a people and knowledge organisation. Its effectiveness in these two areas is essential to be able to effectively

deliver for our sector. We need to continuously develop our existing staff capability and ensure that we get maximum value from our resources, people, money and time to meet the changing needs of our stakeholders and employers.

To achieve our objectives, we are committed to improving our organisation and operations. We will be more flexible, responsive and outward-looking and open in our ways of working, building on our current progress in these areas. We will do this whilst maintaining our intellectual rigour and integrity that are essential to the identification and support of excellent delivery.

“Through SummitSkills we have a new mantra – employer led – enabling us to work to the same goals, with one voice. The new challenge for employers is to be proactive and lead the sector forward. If we do not articulate our needs, we have no-one to blame but ourselves.”

Val Lowman, Bovis Lend Lease



What's the plan?

SummitSkills will operate under **sound business management principles**. This includes continuing to improve our

governance, management systems, financial controls as well as ensuring the organisation has a balanced and secure income flow, including actively securing additional project funding. We will streamline our processes and prioritise resources to focus on improving employer satisfaction. We will seek to expand the sector footprint where there are clear benefits for our existing members.

Sector LMI will also be fed back into SummitSkills to help shape business strategy and planning. This will include **an ongoing evaluation of the sector initiatives led by SummitSkills**, to review effectiveness and impact. Effectiveness of our LMI will be under constant review to ensure improvements can be identified and incorporated.

We will ensure **comprehensive and inclusive representation of employers** across the sector on our board and in our committees and interest groups.

We will maintain the Investors in People standard, applying good practice across our HR policies and procedures. We will develop **an effective and inclusive learning and development programme**, and implement a management and leadership programme for first line managers.

We will develop a communications strategy to **increase the awareness and understanding of SummitSkills** so that we continue to enhance our reputation as a trusted and reliable organisation, both in the information we provide and the ways in which we work.



What are the measures of success?

SummitSkills will be increasingly viewed as a commercially focused organisation which

makes best use of the resources it has available for the benefit of the sector. It will be viewed by employers as effectively understanding and responding to their needs in a more flexible and smarter way.

The staff of SummitSkills will work together effectively, as one organisation across the various teams in order to deliver organisational success. Each team will deliver their responsibilities in the respective 3-year business plan and yearly operational plan to meet these objectives. Staff competencies will be monitored and developed to ensure that contribution from all staff is maximised.

Overall, SummitSkills will be seen as a highly effective Sector Skills Council (SSC) which is both strategically and operationally effective and a credible organisation, fully supported by employers across the sector. SummitSkills will demonstrate powerful and effective leadership and management of its activities across the regions and nations and its commitment to continuous improvement in capacity and capability.

As a result it will be considered an exceptionally well run SSC which will be granted its new licence in 2008/9 as part of the relicensing process managed by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills.



Strategic objective: Partnership approach

To forge effective partnerships to deliver these objectives



Why are we doing this?

SummitSkills does not operate in a vacuum: employers, stakeholders and other partners have an interest in what we do and how we do it. We work in collaboration and do not impose our view on others, but represent the voice of employers to other organisations and stakeholders working in the skills arena. By working jointly we are able to proactively promote the needs of the sector.

Setting up networks to foster a partnership culture was seen to be vital in the development and delivery of the Sector Skills Agreement. There has been much enthusiasm from all parties across the sector to work together, however there is a need for more coordinated activity to continue to encourage people to work more closely together in the future.



What's the plan?

SummitSkills has set up various partnership networks as part of the Sector Skills Agreement and has encouraged other parties to do the same. Already in many regions there are successful forums and we will maximise on this. The **SSA implementation groups** that were established as part of this project are also a core partnership mechanism. Consisting of key local stakeholders and influential employers, these groups are responsible for progressing SSA action at local level. They are the lynchpin of the Sector Skills Agreement implementation on the ground.

Employers, providers, manufacturers, government and other key stakeholders working together. Partnership working of this kind is the source of a more proactive sector and will enable members to share knowledge and best practice and instil a sense of society into the sector.

SummitSkills will also work to improve **collaboration with Higher Education**, not only to influence higher level provision for the sector to make it more accessible and relevant, but also to stimulate increased innovation across the sector.

By working in collaboration with other SSCs and stakeholders on **cross-cutting skills areas** such as information advice and guidance, employability skills, customer service and management and leadership skills where key challenges for the sector are not unique, we will be able to implement joint working which will help secure improvements more quickly and effectively.



What are the measures of success?

SummitSkills will be seen as a valued and respected partner by other stakeholder organisations and SSCs in the network. Our opinion will be actively sought in partner activities, as the organisation is considered a key contributor who delivers. SummitSkills will be seen by employers and stakeholders as a key change agent, effective in leading and facilitating new partnerships and networks to meet the changing needs of building services engineering, so that the strategic vision and improvements for the sector can be realised.

The policy bodies of the four nations will consider SummitSkills to be an effective delivery partner and as such we will be readily sought after to lead and manage specific contracts and key policy activities which will contribute to improved productivity and efficiency in skills delivery for sector.



Values

SummitSkills sets itself high standards in all its work. In delivering our vision and mission expect us to be:

Open

We will be open and approachable, transparent and consistent in our work and the methods we use. We will communicate in a clear, consistent and accessible way and will use our time, money and resources wisely. We will value everyone for their contribution and actions and promote inclusiveness and equal access to opportunities.

Innovative

We will be fresh and creative in the work we undertake. We will be forward looking in our approaches and groundbreaking in our methods to truly represent and work for the sector most effectively.

Committed

We are committed to integrity, honesty and consistently high standards in all our activities both internally within SummitSkills and externally.

Ambitious

We will have a strong desire for success and will continually review the way we work, in order to deliver the highest quality performance in everything we do. We will strive to build a world-class team in which every member feels valued and supported.

Responsive

We respond to local, regional and national agendas by doing what we say we are going to do, when we say we will do it. We will consult, encourage feedback and aim to provide services that meet or exceed the levels that are expected of us.

Enablers

Delivering our strategy requires some key supporting activities which will underpin the objectives and act as enablers to the various projects:

Knowledge Management: effective use of intellectual capital will ensure that specialised sector knowledge, which is the prime asset of the organisation, is captured, shared and managed.

Project Management: effective management of key projects in relation to resources, people, skills and deadlines is very important, especially for major activities which require cross-organisation input.

Communications Strategy: projects and activities will be proactively communicated via a specific communications strategy so employers can see and understand the changes which are happening as a result of their input and work with SummitSkills.

OBJECTIVES

Delivering and evaluating the plan



Monitoring and publishing progress

Progress in delivering this plan will be assessed, in part, against the specific 'measures of success' detailed alongside each objective. However, skills development is incremental and the road can be long and complex. We are committed to supporting research and developing occupational standards and qualifications, but also recognise that the impact of this work is likely to be seen some time after our efforts.

As a key priority we will develop systems for monitoring and reporting our outputs and outcomes – these systems will also help to inform our future strategic thinking.

On a yearly basis we will also monitor our achievements against operating plan activities. Progress will be reported on our website and through a published annual review and financial statements.

Managing risk

There will be risks that may prevent us from achieving our strategic objectives, or make it more difficult to achieve them. We will proactively manage risk so that we have the best chance of reaching our goals. Our approach distinguishes between operational risks and strategic risks:

Operational risks

These risks are primarily concerned with SummitSkills' day-to-day business or the management of SummitSkills as an organisation. These are managed at a local level by one of the executive directors.

Strategic risks

These relate more to SummitSkills' nature and purpose, our capacity and ability to achieve our mission, the environment in which we work across the four nations, our response to opportunities and threats, our vulnerability to political shifts and the solidity of our reputation and standing. The SummitSkills executive and board are responsible for identifying and

managing strategic risks. The strategic risk register is a live document that guides our work. It sets out how we will manage strategic risk and is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by our finance and audit committee on behalf of the board.

Measuring our effectiveness

Our reputation for high standards in all that we do is crucial to our success.

We will judge our effectiveness against our mission, purpose and strategic objectives. To do this, we need to achieve the goals we have set ourselves and evolve as an organisation.

Measuring our success will require an understanding of the positive impact of our work, and the changes we have helped to bring about in the delivery and uptake of training and skills development.

We will use a range of techniques, strategies and sources of information to evidence this success including:

- External evaluations and employer surveys
- Development of performance indicators
- Formal and informal stakeholder feedback
- Demand for and satisfaction with our services
- Securing new contract business
- Nature and extent of media coverage
- Success each year in delivering our annual programmes.

Reviewing the strategic plan – the process:

- A small scale annual review of the plan each September to take into account any changes that occur.
- Those changes are detailed in the 3 year business plan.
- A comprehensive review after three years.
- Revisions are made where appropriate to keep the document relevant.
- In 2011 we will commission an overall review of the organisation and its achievements in delivering this plan.

Our financial framework:

In delivering these plans, we will spend wisely to ensure our spending achieves maximum impact, whilst maintaining a stable and sustainable financial position.

We use the following guiding principles in SummitSkills' financial management:

1. effective systems for financial forecasting, budgeting, control and review
2. appraisal and review of key projects and contracts
3. ongoing commitment to value for money and efficiency to ensure optimum use of resources, minimising waste and containing costs.

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