

Qualitative Evaluation of the Women and Work Sector Pathways Initiative

Final Report

Policy Research Institute



Qualitative Evaluation of the Women and
Work Sector Pathways Initiative

For:

UK Commission for Employment and Skills

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This final report has been prepared by the Policy Research Institute (Leeds Metropolitan University) for the UK Commission for Employment and Skills. It complements an earlier Interim Report prepared and published by the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) in November 2007. The SSDA, which originally managed the WWSPI, merged with the National Employment Panel to become the new UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES). UKCES was launched in April 2008 and retained management of the Initiative and is now taking the lead in embedding the learning from the pilot phase into a recently established longer-term programme.

The Women and Work Sector Pathways Initiative (WWSPI) aims to establish a small number of pilot projects providing innovative solutions to remove the barriers women face in getting on in the workplace, whilst at the same time reducing the skills gaps in the workforce.

POLICY CONTEXT

Two interrelated policy agendas are at the heart of the WWSPI – those set out by the Women and Work Commission and the Leitch Review of Skills.

The Women and Work Commission reported in February 2006, drawing attention to the continuing existence of the pay and opportunity gap for women; and making forty recommendations aimed at bringing about culture change and maximising the potential contribution of women in the workforce. Following this, the Government Action Plan was published in September 2006, identifying a range of proposals, one of which was for the WWSPI.

The Leitch Review of Skills, also published in 2006, highlighted the importance of skills as a means of unlocking individual potential, as well as a source of competitive advantage. The focus of the review is on training and skills for adults in response to analysis which recognises that 70 per cent of the 2020 workforce is already beyond the age of compulsory education, and needs to take steps to upskill to be able to compete in the labour market in the future. Treating employers and individuals as customers is central to the ‘demand-led’ approach to education and training advocated by Leitch and the Government.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation consists of qualitative primary research undertaken in two phases. This final report summarises the key issues in relation to the implementation process, and then focuses on outcomes and learning/implications. It is based on 138 qualitative interviews with national stakeholders, along with stakeholders and beneficiaries of the projects delivered by 9 Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) involved in WWSPI – Asset Skills, Construction Skills, EU Skills, IMI Automotive, Improve, Lantra, Skillfast-UK, Skills for Logistics and SEMTA.

WWSPI DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) developed and coordinated the process to establish projects to take the WWSPI forward, inviting proposals from

SSCs. In total, 16 SSCs submitted project outlines, with 9 of these eventually receiving funding. The design, development and implementation of projects were heavily influenced by both the timeframe for delivery (approximately 16 months from funding of the first 4 projects to Programme completion), and the challenging targets associated with the Programme.

Characteristics of WWSPI projects

The nature and scope of the 9 projects funded through WWSPI are very different. The key characteristics of the projects include:

Evidence based development - the Sector Skills Agreements produced by each SSC provided evidence of skills shortages and gaps within the sector, alongside an employment structure characterised by significant gender imbalance. Within the majority of sectors, women are under-represented throughout the workforce and within all sectors women are less likely to have progressed to management positions than their male counterparts.

Project teams and partnerships – small project teams were established in all SSCs to take WWSPI projects forward, with the majority also convening steering groups to oversee development and review progress. Partnership working is a key element of success and, at both the strategic and delivery level, it varied significantly. At the project level it involved, to varying degrees, a range of stakeholders including Jobcentre Plus, Trade Unions, independent consultants, training providers and employers.

Connection with the Women and Work agenda – all of the projects funded under the Programme designed interventions to support progression (and address vertical segregation). A small number of projects sought to address horizontal segregation and encourage women into male dominated sectors.

Nature of WWSPI interventions – the majority of projects were based on a fixed offer, where the intervention was prescriptive and the content clearly defined. A smaller number of projects were based on more open or flexible offerings, providing the employer with considerable influence over the specific nature, supply and delivery of the training funded under WWSPI.

Marketing and promotion – a range of approaches to marketing and promotion were adopted including direct face-to-face contact with employers (considered by the SSCs to be the most effective approach), the development of promotional materials, promotion on websites and through delivery intermediaries and networks.

Engaging employers and their female employees

All the projects sought to work through employers to reach women in the workplace, with the employer engagement process frequently identified as a resource and time intensive activity. A number of projects supplemented SSC resources with those of intermediaries to undertake this process. Targeting of businesses varied across the Initiative, with some SSCs focussing on large employers, and a smaller number seeking to engage small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

The key motivation for participation, as identified by employers, was a recognition of the benefits of training, either in order to boost morale in the workplace and/or to improve skills. The fact that the training was subsidised made WWSPI an attractive offer for many employers.

Different models of employee engagement were adopted within participating organisations. In the majority of cases, the employer selected the female employees

to participate in the training; in some cases, the employer opened the training up for all female employees; and in a small number of cases the employer was approached about the possibility of participating in the training by the employee.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The targets associated with the individual projects changed as the WWSPI was developed and implemented to ensure that the overall target of 7935 beneficiaries was met. Progress was regularly reviewed by the SSDA and individual SSCs. Active management of the Initiative throughout implementation led to the reallocation of outputs from projects that were struggling to achieve their original targets to those who were overachieving.

Outcomes and impact on the skills and training infrastructure

Evidence from this evaluation suggests that the aims of WWSPI have largely been realised.

At a programme level, WWSPI has provided an opportunity to forge greater connections between key national stakeholders and employers to further the policy drive towards employer-led training and to take forward the diversity agenda. The need for greater collaboration between partners directly involved with the Initiative and other organisations, including the Learning and Skills Council and Trade Unions, is identified as a key learning point for the future.

For the SSCs a number of positive outcomes from the Programme are apparent including:

- The use of SSA research to inform policy interventions.
- The scope to pilot and vary delivery methodologies.
- The 'opening of employer doors' that may otherwise have remained closed.
- The opportunity for increased dialogue with employers about the wider skills agenda.
- Raising the profile of both the SSC and of women's equality issues amongst employers.

Outcomes and impact on the demand side

At the global level, WWSPI is seeking to remove barriers to women's progression, particularly into male dominated roles, within the workforce. Given the way in which the Programme is structured, the achievement of this is dependent on the bottom-up, cumulative effect of the SSC projects on individual women participants and their employers. The qualitative research suggests that a range of positive outcomes have emerged from the Programme at both an organisational and individual level. These include:

- *Financial lever for training* – access to subsidised / free training was identified by a number of employers as a positive outcome of WWSPI, one which enabled them to upskill members of staff with limited cost to the business.
- *Personal development and improved individual performance within the business* – many employers and employees identified personal development, contributing to improved individual performance within the business, as being

the predominant outcome of WWSPI. Specifically, this involved increases in confidence, changes in their approach to work, and the utilisation of new skills. The dominance of progression-related projects within the Programme is evident in that the majority of beneficiaries indicated that personal development outcomes were focussed on supporting them to maintain and improve their current occupational trajectory, rather than providing opportunities for movement to alternative occupational roles which are currently dominated by male employees.

- *Career progression* - employers participating in the research identified a small number of cases in which the individuals that had participated in WWSPI had achieved a tangible progression/promotion within their organisation. Whilst beneficiaries were largely operating in the same occupational roles as prior to the intervention, there had been some increase in responsibility within that role for some participants. A range of potential constraints in relation to progression and promotion were identified including those at a personal level (e.g. childcare responsibilities) and those at an organisational level (e.g. flat hierarchical organisational structures).
- *Employer approaches to Human Resource Development (HRD)* – a number of employers indicated that involvement in WWSPI has impacted positively on their approach to HRD. For example, by introducing new analysis techniques and new approaches to skills development such as ICT based delivery or coaching. In some cases, WWSPI led to the introduction of qualifications and other accredited learning which was new to the business. The Programme also contributed to widening access to training opportunities for certain sections of the workforce, which then stimulated interest in further learning and development opportunities.
- *Approaches to equality and diversity* – there was a general view amongst interviewees that the organisations in which they work operate fairly robust policies in terms of equality and diversity. This contrasted with the broader identification of persistent attitudes which may have a more indirect impact on women's potential, more generally, in the world of work. In a number of cases, involvement with WWSPI has resulted in incremental change in relation to issues of equality and diversity within organisations.

SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

Emerging from the research are a range of issues that have implications for policy in taking forward the Women and Work and demand-led training agendas. These include:

- *The balance between recruitment, progression and cultural change* – WWSPI was led by the interests of each sector and the Initiative evolved to focus largely on the progression of women in the workplace. This is potentially a key outcome which can contribute to a reduction in the pay gap between male and female employees. Overall, WWSPI is recognised as a useful 'stepping stone' towards the culture change desired by the Women and Work Commission, but there remain challenges associated with how to further advance the equality agenda at the organisational and sector level.
- *Engaging employers* – a range of issues relating to the engagement of employers are identified including the merits of targeting organisations of

different sizes; the degree of additionality and deadweight associated with specific interventions; and the potential added value to be accrued from SSCs developing value adding relationships with 'new' employers using WWSPI as the vehicle for initial engagement.

- *Engaging individuals* – targeting employees that will have the greatest impact in terms of the objectives of the WWSPI is a significant challenge, particularly in relation to choices between those that have the most potential to progress, or those most at risk of disadvantage in terms of pay and conditions. The provision of continuity of funding, separate from WWSPI, to support progression into further learning following participation is also a key consideration.

SUSTAINABILITY

The phase 1 WWSPI, which is the focus of this evaluation, ran from 2006-08, with further funding being available for subsequent phases in 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11. The characteristics of WWSPI, in terms of its relatively limited funding and timebound nature, means that tapping into the wider education and training infrastructure is central to its longer-term impact on both the equality and demand-led training agendas. In this respect, the WWSPI needs to make further connections with a range of both current and potential partners and funding mechanisms.

The knowledge and experience of those involved in developing and implementing WWSPI suggest a range of actions which should underpin the development of the Initiative in the future. These include the identification of a number of factors which can help to support successful implementation of subsequent phases at both the programme and project level relating to: developing the Programme/project infrastructure; partnership working; project design; employer engagement; and value adding activity.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Summary

The Women and Work Sector Pathways Initiative (WWSPI) aims to establish a small number of pilot projects providing innovative solutions to remove the barriers women face in getting on in the workplace, whilst at the same time reducing the skills gaps in the workforce.

Policy Context

Two interrelated policy agendas are at the heart of the WWSPI – those set out by the Women and Work Commission and the Leitch Review of Skills.

The Women and Work Commission reported in February 2006, drawing attention to the continuing existence of the pay and opportunity gap for women; and making forty recommendations aimed at bringing about culture change and maximising the potential contribution of women in the workforce. Following this, the Government Action Plan was published in September 2006, identifying a range of proposals, one of which was for the WWSPI.

The Leitch Review of Skills, also published in 2006, highlighted the importance of skills as a means of unlocking individual potential, as well as a source of competitive advantage. The focus of the review is on training and skills for adults in response to analysis which recognises that 70 per cent of the 2020 workforce is already beyond the age of compulsory education, and needs to take steps to upskill to be able to compete in the labour market in the future. Treating employers and individuals as customers is central to the 'demand-led' approach to education and training advocated by Leitch and the Government.

Methodology

The evaluation consists of qualitative primary research undertaken in two phases. This final report summarises the key issues in relation to the implementation process, and then focuses on outcomes and implications for policy. It is based on qualitative interviews with national stakeholders, along with stakeholders and beneficiaries of the projects delivered by all nine Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) involved in WWSPI – Asset Skills, Construction Skills, EU Skills, IMI Automotive, Improve, Lantra, Skillfast-UK, Skills for Logistics and SEMTA.

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embedding the learning from the pilot phase into a recently established longer-term programme. The Skills for Business Network, which consisted of the SSDA and the SSCs, was also dissolved at this time. The Alliance of Sector Skills Councils is the new organisation which comprises all 25 licensed UK Sector Skills Councils.

1.1 Policy Context

The following provides an overview of the two interrelated policy agendas at the heart of the WWSPI. These agendas are set out by the work of the Women and Work Commission and the Leitch Review of Skills.

1.1.1 Women and Work Commission

In the summer of 2004 Baroness Prosser was asked to Chair an independent review (the Women and Work Commission) to examine the causes of the gender pay and opportunities gap and to find practical ideas to close it within a generation. In February 2006 the Women and Work Commission published their review and made recommendations in the report '*Shaping a Fairer Future*'. The review drew attention to the many advances in women's position in society and at work made in the thirty years since the Equal Pay Act, with more women in employment and occupying senior positions than ever before. However in spite of recent progress a pay and opportunity gap for women remains. For example:

- Women who work full time earn less than men who work full time
- Women are crowded into a narrow range of lower paying occupations or sectors (horizontal segregation) – often part time, which do not make the most of their skills
- Only one third of managers and senior officials are women – with women tending to be found at the lower levels of organisational hierarchies (vertical segregation) or facing a 'glass ceiling' which limits their opportunities for promotion to the highest levels
- Women face an unfair disadvantage and the UK economy is losing out in terms of both productivity and output.

The review highlights the need for a change in culture to maximise the potential contribution of women. Many girls and young women are still following traditional routes in education and training into occupations and sectors which pay less than other (more male dominated) occupations. It is argued that a fundamental change is needed in order to challenge assumptions about the types of jobs women and men can do. The Commission set out a wide-ranging and challenging agenda, making

forty recommendations aimed at bringing about culture change and maximising the potential of women in the workforce.

Responding to these recommendations, the Government Action Plan, published in September 2006 put forward a range of proposals, one of which was for the Women and Work Sector Pathways Initiative (WWSPI). This led to the development of a £10m (matched by employers) pilot project to support Sector Skills Councils to develop projects providing women with the skills, confidence and mentoring support to progress or move into male-dominated occupations (DCLG 2007). SSCs working with others have a key role to play promoting what works for employers in terms of diversity, while also tackling the skills infrastructure. They can make the case for diversity, support targeted training and embed diversity strategically through Occupational Standards, qualifications frameworks and labour market intelligence (GHK 2006).

1.1.2 Skills Policy

Skills are a central element of the Government's strategy to meet the twin policy priorities associated with social justice and improving competitiveness. The influential Leitch Review (H. M. Treasury 2006) highlighted the importance of skills as a means of unlocking the potential of people and as a source of competitive advantage. Leitch identified both the strengths of the system (such as an excellent Higher Education system, many good initiatives on vocational training and an increasingly effective school system) as well as several key weaknesses associated with the system including issues associated with basic skills and levels of vocational skills amongst the workforce. Leitch articulated a challenging agenda and an ambition to be a world leader in skills by 2020. The major focus of the review is placed on training and skills for adults in response to analysis which recognises that 70 per cent of the 2020 workforce is already beyond the age of compulsory education and needs to take steps to upskill to be able to compete in the labour market in the future. A 'world class' system is envisaged where:

- Government develops an education and skills infrastructure where individuals and employers drive the system
- Employers respond to opportunities presented by more relevant education and training provision
- Individuals raise their aspirations and invest in learning.

The Leitch recommendations have been embraced by the Government and a range of developments are being taken forward. These include: the establishment of the Commission for Employment and Skills to assess progress towards making the UK a world leader in skills and to encourage innovation; a core role for 'empowered' Sector Skills Councils with a remit to rationalise qualifications; expanded brokerage services and funding of vocational training through Train to Gain and Learner Accounts; and an integrated employment and skills system. Treating employers and individuals as customers is central to the 'demand-led' approach to education and training advocated by Leitch and the Government.

The connection between the skills agenda and the equalities agenda is explicitly made in the paper outlining the Government's approach to the implementation of the Leitch Review of Skills in England (DIUS 2007). Four Departmental Ministers, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister sign up to a foreword which includes the following commitment:

We will work with employers, trade unions, schools, colleges, universities, training providers and individuals themselves, to break down barriers to opportunity, and give everyone the best chance to make the most of themselves and their potential.....In our rapidly-changing world, having a highly-skilled workforce isn't an optional extra; it's an economic necessity. But developing the right culture for skills and employment isn't just about being able to compete in the global economy. It's also the most effective way of tackling family poverty, encouraging people to strive for a better life, and increasing social mobility (p3-4).

There is clearly a supportive policy context for both the equalities and skills agendas and this is coupled with high expectations for associated policy interventions such as the WWSPI which seek to take these challenging and aspirational agendas forward.

1.2 Women and Work Sector Pathways Initiative (WWSPI)

The Department for Education and Skills (now the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS)) drew up the Policy Specification for WWSPI (following a period of consultation with, for example, the Skills for Business Network, Department for Trade and Industry and Trades Union Council) in the summer of 2006. The rationale for policy intervention was clearly laid out in the specification and reflected the analysis and focus of the Women and Work Commission on the implications of occupational segregation, part time working and progression on women's earnings. The aim of the Initiative was to establish a small number of test

bed projects providing innovative solutions to removing the barriers women face in getting on in the workplace and maximising their contribution to reducing skills gaps in the workforce. The WWSPI aimed to draw in significant employer commitment to the interventions developed through matched and in-kind funding. The initial headline target for the WWSPI was to test new recruitment and career pathways for at least 10,000 women over a two-year period (although this was revised to a total of 7,935 women).

A partnership approach to policy implementation was pursued with the Skills for Business Network (Sector Skills Councils and the Sector Skills Development Agency) playing a leading role. Gender imbalance in the workforce varies widely between sectors and the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are seen to be uniquely placed to provide a contextualised analysis and connections with employers to design interventions to support entry to the sector and career development of women. The Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) was responsible for the implementation and administration of the Programme as a whole.

The target groups specified for the Programme covered a wide range of potential beneficiaries where:

- Women are under-represented across the sector as a whole
- Women are under-represented in specific sub-sectors within a sector
- Women are under-represented in specific occupations within a sector
- Women are concentrated in low-skilled/low paid jobs within a sector.

The WWSPI was one of three related interventions proposed in the March 2006 Budget to address work and employment issues for women. The other two measures were:

- To double the number of skills coaches and extend skills coaching to 11 Jobcentre Plus districts
- Additional level 3 trial to support low skilled part time and ethnic minority women in London.

The WWSPI ran until March 2008, however further funding was announced in Spring 2008 to extend the Programme into a second phase running from April 2008 to March 2009. Funding will also be available for a third and fourth phase running in 2009/10 and 2010/11 respectively. This report focuses solely on the first phase of the WWSPI. In total, nine SSCs progressed the WWSPI – Asset Skills, Construction

Skills, Energy & Utility Skills, IMI Automotive Skills, Improve, Lantra, SEMTA, Skillfast-UK and Skills for Logistics.

1.2.1 Evaluation and monitoring

The SSDA led on the evaluation and monitoring arrangements for the WWSPI. The aims and objectives of the overall evaluation of the WWSPI are to:

- Assess the impact of the Initiative and whether it is effectively meeting the long-term policy objectives at sector level and achieving desired outcomes
- Review performance and monitoring information to monitor and understand developments in the Initiative and to inform partners on progress against the long-term, medium-term and short-term objectives of the Initiative
- Provide feedback to encourage the continuous improvement of the Initiative throughout the lifecycle of the project. This will be achieved by identifying success factors and barriers to success and enabling shared learning for the project and for the longer-term.

This report is based on a qualitative evaluation, which forms one part of the overall evaluation strategy for WWSPI. The overall evaluation also includes a beneficiary survey of both employers and individual women participating in the Programme. This qualitative evaluation has its own set of discrete, but related aims. These are:

- Familiarisation with the Initiative and policy background
- Review of the sectoral context
- Reporting on development, set-up and conditions of early stages and advising on improvements
- To report on further developments and indications of impact
- To facilitate shared learning
- To advise on the development of the evaluation overall.

An evaluation framework for this element of the evaluation was developed in order to meet these aims and objectives and this is set out in Appendix 1.

1.2.2 Methodology

This evaluation consists largely of qualitative primary research undertaken in two phases. Phase 1 followed WWSPI developments up until July 2007 and resulted in an interim report (SSDA/PRI 2007). The interim report was based on a review of the background literature and documentation regarding the development and implementation of the Initiative; a review of the individual SSC project proposals;

interviews with key stakeholders; and qualitative research with four of the WWSPI projects taken forward by SSCs (Construction Skills, Improve, Lantra, Skillfast-UK).

This final report for the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) presents the findings from phase 2 of the evaluation and shifts the emphasis of the evaluation from a focus on the implementation process to a focus on outcomes and learning/implications. It is based on further qualitative interviews with national stakeholders, along with stakeholders and beneficiaries of the projects delivered by all nine SSCs involved in WWSPI (i.e. the four SSCs included in phase 1 of the research, plus Asset Skills, EU Skills, IMI Automotive, Skills for Logistics and SEMTA). Further information on the methodology is available in Appendix 2. A learning workshop was held for UKCES, SSC representatives and other key stakeholders in relation to WWSPI in December 2008, at which the findings from the research were presented. A series of questions were discussed during the workshop. A summary of these discussions is presented in Appendix 3.

2 WWSPI DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Summary:

The Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) developed and coordinated the process to establish projects to take the WWSPI forward, inviting proposals from all the SSCs in the Skills for Business Network. In total, 16 SSCs submitted project outlines, with 9 of these eventually receiving funding. The nature and scope of the 9 projects funded through WWSPI are very different. The key elements of the projects include:

- *Evidence based development* - the Sector Skills Agreements produced by each SSC involved in the WWSPI provided evidence of skills shortages and gaps within the sector, alongside an employment structure characterised by significant gender imbalance.
- *Project teams and partnerships* – small project teams were established in all SSCs to take WWSPI projects forward, with the majority also convening steering groups. Partnership activity, at both the strategic and delivery level, varied significantly across the projects and involved, to varying degrees, a range of stakeholders including Jobcentre Plus, Trade Unions, independent consultants, training providers and employers.
- *Connection with the Women and Work agenda* – all of the projects funded under the Programme had an element which sought to address vertical segregation (progression), with a small number seeking to address horizontal segregation and encourage women into male dominated sectors.
- *Nature of WWSPI interventions* – the majority of projects were based on a fixed offer, where the intervention was prescriptive and the content clearly defined. A smaller number of projects were based on more open or flexible offerings, providing the employer with considerable control over the nature, supply and delivery of the training funded under WWSPI.
- *Marketing and promotion* – a range of approaches to marketing and promotion were adopted including direct face-to-face contact with employers (considered by the SSCs to be the most effective approach), the development of promotional materials, promotion on websites and through delivery intermediaries and networks.
- *Employer engagement process* – all the projects sought to work through employers to reach women in the workplace, with the employer engagement process frequently identified as a resource and time intensive activity.
- *Monitoring, review and evaluation* – The SSDA led on the evaluation and monitoring arrangements for WWSPI, establishing a performance management system to monitor and review progress at the programme level.

The initial development of the Programme was reviewed in detail in the Interim Report for the WWSPI published in November 2007 (SSDA/PRI 2007). The qualitative research with key national stakeholders and those involved with four of the projects established at the time was undertaken at a relatively early stage of programme implementation (Spring 2007). This section of the report briefly reviews the key findings of the interim report before drawing on further research conducted in Autumn 2008 with national stakeholders and those involved – including SSCs, training providers, employers and women beneficiaries - in all nine projects underpinning the WWSPI.

2.1 Programme design

The Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) developed and coordinated the process to establish Skills for Business Network (SfBN) projects to take the WWSPI forward. A Steering Group was established to oversee the implementation of the Initiative including representatives from the Department for Employment and Skills, SSDA, Women and Equality Unit, Learning and Skills Council and the Trade Union Congress.

All twenty-five SSCs in the SfBN were invited to put together proposals to take the Initiative forward. There was an initial preference to establish a small number of 'larger' projects to deliver the Programme as this was seen to be the most effective mechanism to take the Initiative forward and to achieve the challenging targets associated with WWSPI. However this was not possible given the size of the projects put forward for consideration by the SSCs. The SSDA worked with the SSCs to further develop the conceptualisation of the projects with a focus on attaining quality interventions with realistic expectations. Considerable effort was made by those designing the Initiative and those seeking to implement it to ensure that value was added to existing provision, targets were realistic and the prospect of displacement and deadweight was minimised.

Sixteen SSCs submitted initial project outlines and four of these were granted funding in November/December 2006, with a further five being funded and commencing by March 2007.

The Interim Report highlighted some of the complexities associated with taking the WWSPI forward in relation to issues such as State Aid and Positive Action. It also highlighted the development time required to engage relevant stakeholders and to

develop evidence-based bids, and the supportive role the SSDA played in ensuring sufficient projects were funded to reach the headline targets. The Interim Report drew attention to the nature of the linkages of the WWSPI and the other elements of the Women and Work Programme (i.e. skills coaches and level 3 pilots); and the importance of both an operational group to share experiences and best practice and a strategic development group to encourage value-adding activity and minimise duplication.

Since the publication of the Interim Report, the WWSPI has continued to develop and become established. The nine projects funded to underpin the Programme were established and delivered their interventions until the original WWSPI funding¹ ceased in March 2008.

Two factors heavily influenced programme design, development and implementation. Firstly, the timeframe for development and implementation and secondly, the challenging targets of 5,000 women each year to benefit from the Programme.

The WWSPI was developed and delivered in less than two years following its announcement in the Budget speech in 2006. As illustrated in the table over the page (Table 2.1), the policy specification was completed in three months and this was generally viewed to provide a robust foundation for the Programme and many stakeholders suggested a considerable achievement within the timeframe. Similarly the SSDA moved the process along with some urgency inviting proposals from the SfBN in August 2006. Several stakeholders reflected on the process and generally concluded that the initial response of the SSCs to the invitation to put forward projects was 'disappointing' both in terms of the number of bids (although eventually two in three SSCs put forward proposals) and the variable quality of the proposals. The second call for proposals helped increase the number of projects and the proactive approach adopted by the SSDA was generally recognised as an important factor in this and in improving the quality of the bids.

¹ Further funding to continue the WWSPI 2008-2011 was agreed and WWSPI is being continued into second (2008-09), third (2009-10) and fourth (2010/11) phases.

2.1.1 Timeframe

Table 2.1: Timeline

Announcement of Women and Work Initiative	April 2006
Development of Policy Specification	May-July 2006
Invite proposals from SfBN	August 2006
Second call for proposals	September 2006
16 proposals submitted	September 2006
4 projects funded	November/December 2006
Further 5 projects funded	March 2007
Interim evaluation report	November 2007
New funding announced for further phases of WWSPI (2008/9; 2009/10; 2010/11)	December 2007
Invite further proposals from SfBN	January 2008
Funding for continuation of 5 projects in phase 2	February 2008
7 new proposals for Phase 2 submitted	August 2008
Original WWSPI closed	March 2008
7 new Phase 2 projects funded	October 2008
Pilot Programme evaluation reports	December 2008

Source: Policy Research Institute

A number of factors appeared to have influenced the number and quality of bids put forward by the SSCs. Two factors appear to have been particularly influential (i) the existence of a Sector Skills Agreement at the time project proposals were being requested (ii) the general demands placed on the skills infrastructure at the time.

The Sector Skills Agreements played an important role in providing the evidence of skills gaps and shortages and targeting the Initiative on these. SSCs that had been able to develop their SSAs were in a much stronger position to be able to marshal the evidence to support a proposal than SSCs that were in the early stages of SSA development. Stakeholders within the SSCs report the evidence underpinning the SSA as an important input in the design and development of the intervention and an early example of the utility of the SSAs.

A further important factor influencing the number of SSCs putting forward proposals under the Initiative is the volume of policy developments SSCs are asked to respond to, whilst at the same time pursuing an established agenda. SSCs themselves are dynamic organisations, subject to environmental and organisational changes which impact on priorities and capacity. These changes clearly have implications for the capacity of SSCs to respond to initiatives such as this one, as they make strategic choices relating to the allocation of limited resources at a point in time.

Notwithstanding these circumstances, the vast majority of the stakeholders both at the strategic level and within the Skills for Business Network contributing to the evaluation research suggested that the bidding process had been very effective in developing some innovative, realistic and achievable projects to take the WWSPI forward. However the time taken to translate initial proposals into agreed projects and to draw up contracts had taken longer than originally anticipated in most instances and impacted adversely on the time available for delivery.

2.1.2 Targets

The original targets of 5,000 women each year (10,000 in total) were challenging within the context of an evolving SfBN and emergent WWSPI. In 2006 the SfBN network was still at a relatively early stage of development and under considerable pressure to deliver on a range of skills related policy issues. Some SSCs were long-established and relatively well resourced whilst others were relatively new and had limited capacity (SSDA 2006). WWSPI came along at a time when there were a range of other calls for action by SSCs which were often stretching limited resources.

The pressure to meet targets influenced decision-making associated with WWSPI at various times. For example, in the early stages of programme development the SSDA encouraged several SSCs to increase the targets associated with their original bids so that the cumulative contribution of the nine individual projects was in line with policy expectations. A performance management system was put in place to inform progress and a proactive approach to WWSPI management was undertaken by the SSDA. As the Programme progressed several SSCs were encouraged to increase the targets associated with their projects further to off-set the mixed progress across the WWSPI and ensure that the cumulative targets for the Programme were met.

2.2 Characteristics of the Programme

Nine SSC based projects were developed to take forward the WWSPI, although the nature and scope of the nine projects funded through WWSPI are very different. To provide an insight into this and a context for further analysis, the characteristics of the projects underpinning the Programme are outlined below in terms of the following key elements:

- Evidence based development
- Project teams and partnerships
- Connection between the projects and the Women and Work agenda
- Nature of WWSPI interventions
- Marketing and promotion
- Employer engagement process
- Monitoring, review and evaluation

2.2.1 Evidence based development (SSAs)

The WWSPI is designed to identify areas of need where intervention will add real value to improving working conditions for women and address skills shortages in specific sectors and occupations. The sector situation was outlined in each Sector Skills Agreement which provided an insight into the existence of particular skills shortages and gaps within each sector, alongside an employment structure characterised by significant gender imbalance. This is summarised in Table 2.2 where the sector conditions are connected with the objectives of the WWSPI in terms of recruitment, progression and cultural change.

Table 2.2: Characteristics of the sector

SSC	Recruitment (under-representation of women in the sector)	Progression (under-representation of women in certain occupations)	Cultural barriers
Construction Skills	✓	✓	✓
Lantra	✓	✓	✓
Skillfast-UK		✓	✓
Skills for Logistics	✓	✓	✓
Asset Skills		✓	✓
IMI Automotive Skills	✓	✓	✓
EU Skills	✓	✓	✓
Improve Ltd	✓	✓	✓
SEMTA	✓	✓	✓

Source: Policy Research Institute

With the exception of Asset Skills and Skillfast-UK, women are under-represented in each of the sectors funded through WWSPI. In many sectors (e.g. Construction, SEMTA, IMI Automotive) the under-representation of women in the workforce is a longstanding issue; whilst the existence of a glass ceiling is apparent across all sectors with, for example, women far less likely to be in management positions than their male counterparts. The occupations in which female employment is most common tend to be those characterised by low pay. Skills shortages within higher level and technical or managerial occupations are frequently identified in the SSAs, and under-representation of women in these roles is highlighted as a key issue.

Overall the basic premise underpinning WWSPI is that there is considerable potential among the female workforce that is being under-used, and that this could contribute to alleviating identified skills shortages within each sector; and lead to productivity improvements. In response to these issues, individual SSCs developed a range of projects to underpin the implementation of WWSPI which variously sought to tackle horizontal segregation, vertical segregation and cultural barriers (and sometimes all three).

2.2.2 Project teams and partnerships

Typically small project teams were established in each SSC to take the WWSPI projects forward. Core project teams generally consisted of a project manager supplemented with administrative support and a senior executive within the SSC providing strategic oversight. Several projects employed Associates (self employed or small consultancies) to support project delivery and particularly employer engagement. These Associates often had sector specific knowledge, considerable experience and a range of network contacts with employers. In addition, several projects sought to work through intermediaries such as Trade Unions (often to connect with Union Learning Representatives as a route to recruiting employees in the workplace) and sector based training providers to engage employers.

Most projects convened steering group(s) where the interests of the strategic partners were played out, however a couple used an internal group comprised solely of SSC members to develop and oversee their WWSPI projects.

Partnership working, often a key element associated with the development and delivery of publicly funded skills related interventions in England, was a key feature of the approach underpinning the development and delivery of WWSPI. The research on which this evaluation is based reveals a range of organisations involved in WWSPI, as illustrated in Table 2.3. In order to gain a better understanding of the partnership activity underpinning the Programme the types of partnerships are classified as Strategic and Delivery. In this context, a strategic partnership is one where partners share the overall aims and objectives of the project and contribute to the development and review of it. A delivery partnership is a relationship between the SSC and an organisation which has had a key role in the implementation of the specific WWSPI interventions, normally as a provider or consumer of interventions funded through WWSPI.

Table 2.3: Partners

SSC	Employment Agencies	Trade Unions	Independent Consultants	Training Providers	Employers
Construction Skills	D		D	S/D	S/D
Lantra				D	D
Skillfast-UK		S	S/D	S/D	S/D
Skills for Logistics				D	D
Asset Skills		S		D	S/D
IMI Automotive Skills	D		S/D	D	S/D
EU Skills				D	D
Improve Ltd		S		D	D
SEMTA		S/D	S/D	D	S/D

Source: Project bids (S denotes strategic/ D denotes Delivery)

It is clear that the number and nature of the partnerships underpinning WWSPI varies considerably. In the case of Skills for Logistics the project was developed ‘in-house’ and the key partners in delivery were the training providers (who were invited to participate and funded on delivery of outputs) and employers (whose role was limited to consumption of the service on offer). By way of contrast, Skillfast-UK engaged a wide range of partners in the initial design and ongoing review of the WWSPI interventions through several strategic forums co-ordinated by a steering group. Most of the key actors were involved at both the strategic and delivery level indicating a high degree of project integration. Employers clearly played a key role as consumers in delivery of all projects, however in several projects they also played a key role in the development of the original intervention, were key members of project steering groups and in several instances actively championed the intervention with their peers.

2.2.3 Connection between the SSC projects and the Women and Work agenda

The WWSPI consists of nine different projects each led by a SSC. Each project has one or more strands (or interventions) which seek to support the development of skills to enable the recruitment of women into sectors where women are under-represented, or to support the development of skills to further career progression. Table 2.4 describes the types of interventions underpinning the WWSPI and shows how they map onto the objectives of the Women and Work Commission agenda. It illustrates the diversity of the projects funded under the Programme and the various interventions designed to take the agenda forward. In some instances, interventions focus on recruitment into sectors where women are under-represented, whilst in others there is a focus on the progression of women into male dominated occupations. In several instances an intervention may support both new recruits to the sector as well as those already working in the sector. More often than not, the bulk of project activity focussed on a single intervention funded under the WWSPI umbrella project (marked in bold in the table) and this intervention delivered the majority of the outputs associated with the WWSPI.

From this mapping exercise it is clear that the projects underpinning WWSPI are in tune with the key issues highlighted by the Women and Work Commission report. Table 2.4 indicates that all the projects funded under the Programme had an element which sought to address vertical segregation, three projects sought to address horizontal segregation and encourage women into male dominated sectors. Four projects aspired to influence culture change in sectors experiencing horizontal and/or vertical segregation. In most instances this culture change is to be achieved largely through the combined effect of the interventions to address horizontal and/or vertical segregation and capacity building (e.g. training the trainers), however one project (SEMTA) provided a specific intervention to facilitate cultural change amongst employers.

Table 2.4: Objectives of WWSPI and SSC strands (interventions)

	Women and Work Sector Pathways Initiative – key objectives		
SSC	Recruitment and retention	Career Progression	Culture Change
Construction Skills	Construction related graduates Non construction related graduates to retrain	Upskill in targeted occupations	✓
Lantra		Training needs analysis	✓
Skillfast-UK	Design graduates into the sector	Upskill operatives and those in lower level occupations Train the trainer Personal development for middle management	✓
Skills for Logistics	Support LGV driver qualification	Develop skills to support progression in warehousing occupations Management mentoring	✓
Asset Skills	Promote opportunities to pursue careers within the sector	Improve literacy and numeracy skills Provide focussed needs analysis linked to Individual Development Plans	
IMI Automotive Skills	Offer training opportunities to women new to the sector	Develop skills to support progression Establish support mentoring/coaching network	
EU Skills		Professional development programme Management mentors	
Improve Ltd		Level 3 management qualification	
SEMTA		Develop a career development Plan Mentoring (Ambassadors)	Cultural Analysis Tool

Source: Project bids

2.2.4 Nature of WWSPI interventions

It is useful to classify the interventions funded under the WWSPI under two broad headings – fixed or flexible - to further illustrate the nature of the key interventions

underpinning WWSPI. The majority of interventions are based on a fixed-offer where the intervention is prescriptive and the content clearly defined. This was the design favoured by the panel overseeing the bids for funding as it provided a sound basis for planning and a degree of certainty surrounding the nature of the intervention process and the likely outcomes. As a consequence the majority of the interventions underpinning WWPSI are fixed-offer in nature. However the nature of the fixed offer interventions provided through the WWSPI is highly variable and reflects the analysis of the skills gaps and shortages of employers in each specific sector. The major fixed offer interventions funded by WWSPI are listed below:

- Basic skills embedded in Infection control (Asset Skills)
- Automotive Retail Management Standards at the appropriate level (IMI Automotive)
- Level 3 Chartered Institute of Management Qualification (Improve)
- LGV Driving Licence (Skills for Logistics)
- 4 day Personal Development Programme (EU Skills)
- 3 hour Personal Development workshop (SEMTA)

The Infection Control, Automotive Retail Standards and LGV Driving Licence are clearly sector specific and seek to address technical requirements for work and progression in these sectors. The other interventions are more general in nature; however, the target group for the intervention (i.e. women) and the sector that they work in was taken into account and informed the specific, detailed design and content of these interventions. The training courses clearly varied in content and level of qualification as well as delivery mode with, for example, the LGV Driving Licence largely dependent upon personal interaction and practical application and the Management Qualification largely dependent upon academically oriented technology enabled learning.

The Personal Development Programmes are noticeably very different in terms of duration and content. Both are aimed at women in (or entering) occupations in their respective sectors and seek to provide a basis to encourage women to think about developing their careers. The projects include specific further elements in the form of ongoing coaching or mentoring support for women and the SEMTA project also contained a further intervention aimed at encouraging organisations to assess their cultural diversity by using a 'Cultural Analysis tool'.

Several other projects funded through the WWSPI (Lantra, Skillfast-UK, Construction Skills) were based on more open or flexible offerings. The approach underpinning this type of intervention is based on providing the employer with considerable control

over the nature, supply and delivery of the training funded under WWSPI. The intervention methodology is based on the SSC (or intermediary) establishing initial contact with an employer to discuss business issues and the implications of these for the skills of their workforce. The employer is expected to outline their own requirements within the constraints of the WWSPI eligibility criteria and source their own training providers as well as providing evidence of its completion. As a result, a wide range of providers, content and delivery methodologies were adopted to suit the interests of individual employers. In this way these interventions were employer led at the micro level of the organisation, as opposed to the fixed offer interventions which were largely based on a pre-determined offer informed by employer interests at the sectoral level.

Both open and fixed offer interventions were introduced to employers through a range of marketing and promotional activity.

2.2.5 Marketing and promotion

Marketing and promotion were key elements in raising awareness and encouraging take up of the projects by employers and their employees. As one might expect, a range of approaches to connect with the interests of key stakeholders and beneficiaries underpinned the marketing and promotion of the projects funded through WWSPI (Table 2.5).

Table 2.5: Marketing and promotion

SSC	Direct face to face	Promotional materials	Networking	Website	Delivery Intermediaries*
Construction Skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lantra	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Skillfast-UK	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Skills for Logistics		✓		✓	✓
Asset Skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
IMI Automotive Skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
EU Skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Improve Ltd	✓	✓	✓	✓	
SEMTA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Policy Research Institute * e.g. Training providers, Trade Unions

All the projects developed their own promotional materials to support the delivery of their projects and promoted the projects through their websites. Several projects developed a range of different promotional materials to connect with the interests of the various stakeholders (including employers, employees and intermediaries) involved in the project. For example, leaflets for employers often contained key messages associated with labour market information about the need to attract, retain and develop women to meet skills needs. This was often accompanied by general messages about the positive impact of upskilling the workforce along with information clearly setting out how to engage with the project. Some projects provided a clear outline of the whole process and one developed by Skillfast-UK was taken on by several other SSCs.

Other communication channels such as advertorials and the trade press were used extensively to promote both individual projects and the WWSPI. Case studies based on the success of women and/or the benefits realised by employers were also developed and promoted in some sectors. Several projects promoted WWSPI through established employer networks and Trade Associations, along with women's networks, both within individual large employers and sectors more generally. Projects also promoted the WWSPI through sector training providers in the expectation that the marketing activity of the training providers would reach both employers and women in the current/potential workforce. The majority of the projects used, where possible, direct face-to-face contact with employers and face-to-face contact through relevant SSC teams to promote the WWSPI and engage delivery partners and employers to take the Initiative forward.

2.2.6 Employer engagement process

All the projects sought to work through employers to reach women in the workplace, consequently employer engagement was a crucial element of the WWSPI. As illustrated previously, some employers were strategic partners in the design, development and review of the projects funded through WWSPI and participated in project steering groups or as a 'testing ground' for the projects. Most commonly however, employers were solely consumers of the interventions developed and delivered through WWSPI.

A range of factors constrain employer training activity more generally including the cost of the training, reluctance to provide time off for training, the fear that trained staff will leave and limited knowledge about what is available from where.

Consequently engaging employers in publicly funded training related interventions such as the one provided through WWSPI can often be a significant challenge. The qualitative interviews with employers identified a range of positive motivations for becoming involved with the WWSPI usually related to the benefits of training in terms of demonstrating the organisation's commitment to the workforce in order to boost morale and/or to improve the skills of the individual, either in relation to a current job or a job that they may do in the future. The importance (in some sectors) of providing training in order to satisfy the requirements of customers was also apparent. The fact that the training was subsidised and in some instances free at the point of delivery made WWSPI an attractive offer for many employers.

As demonstrated in the previous section, SSC projects adopted a range of marketing and promotional activities to encourage employer engagement. The SSCs themselves report that personal contact with employers is overwhelmingly the most effective way of engaging employers. The engagement process is however often a resource intensive process underpinned by several face-to-face and/or telephone meetings with the same and/or different company representatives (e.g. national/regional/local level, Board level/Training (HR)/Line managers). The internal business decision-making processes can be time consuming and impact on the engagement of an employer in a time-constrained project of this type. For example training budgets and plans are often determined for the year and unless the connection between the WWSPI and the planning cycle of the employer coincide, an employer may be tied to a great extent through its previously planned activity, determined through a systematic human resource development system.

Several SSCs involved other (outside the core WWSPI project team) employer-facing personnel in the employer engagement process. One WWSPI project manager reported a 'whole organisation' approach to employer engagement with the Chairman, senior executives, skills brokers and other staff championing the Initiative amongst employers at every opportunity and the WWSPI project team regularly talking about the Programme with colleagues. Employers expressing interest were then followed up by the WWSPI core team with courtesy calls and an information pack which detailed in clear and concise terms the nature and benefits of the intervention to take forward the employer engagement process. Variations on this approach were adopted by several WWSPI projects.

The size of the potential market and the limited capacity of SSCs in terms of personnel available to connect with employers meant that many used intermediaries

or partners to engage employers. In some instances this was the prime means of employer engagement, in most instances it supplemented SSC resources. In one instance a number of 'Associates' played a key role in the development and delivery of the WWSPI project, whilst in another project a training provider was solely responsible for employer engagement. The approach adopted in each intervention appeared to be contingent upon a range of specific circumstances associated with, for example, the internal workings of the SSC, delivery model and sector structure associated with the individual WWSPI project.

A further aspect of employer engagement was the adoption of a strategic or targeted approach which was often contingent upon a combination of the nature and aims of the project and the structure of the sector. There was considerable variation across the Programme with some projects targeting the small number of large employers which dominated employment in the specific sector, and other projects targeting small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) which account for the vast majority of enterprises in their specific sector. In several instances a two-pronged approach was adopted which variously targeted large employers (often as exemplars or champions) and SMEs (as the major potential beneficiary).

WWSPI projects were dependent upon employers as a route to women in the workforce. Whilst the approach adopted by the employer reflected certain organisational characteristics, there appeared to be three general models of employee engagement adopted by employers. Firstly, and most commonly, where an employer actively selected appropriate candidates for training (often reflecting a combination of business needs and employee readiness to learn). In some cases the need for training had already been identified in individual personal development plans or through staff development or appraisal processes, in other cases it was a more emergent process initiated through employer connection with the WWSPI project. Secondly, the WWSPI opportunity was communicated widely and open to all women employees. Some employers were uneasy about making training opportunities available to women only in this way (and the resentment that this might cause amongst male members of the workforce) and approached this cautiously. Employers suggested that the wide communication was generally met with a fairly positive response and resulted in significant numbers of candidates coming forward. Thirdly (and least commonly) the employer was approached by a member of staff who had heard about the Programme and recognised an opportunity to use it to undertake some training.

The interviews with employers suggest that the amount of time the employer invested in engaging women employees varied considerably. This appeared to relate to (at least to some extent) the type of intervention (fixed or flexible) on offer and the approach to communicating the offer to employees. Most fixed interventions could be organised relatively easily by the employer through liaison with the SSC or training provider to agree practical delivery of the specific intervention in terms of dates, times, venues and number of participants. The fixed offer could be communicated using standard documentation relatively easily to the workforce through established channels. Open offer interventions required employers to consider what training was required and who might be involved. This often involved careful consideration, intelligence gathering and choice. Several employers devolved this to various departments and the managers of these departments were expected to coordinate this activity at the local level. For employers where, for example, assess-train-review and other human resource development systems were not in place, this could be a time-consuming, uncertain but often rewarding process.

Several employers noted the effort required to encourage often 'reluctant learners' (e.g. older women who had not undertaken learning since leaving post compulsory education, those with caring responsibilities, younger women with latent interest).

A key aspect of many WWSPI projects was to alleviate the administrative burden that can often act as a barrier to employer engagement in publicly funded training initiatives. Considerable collective effort was placed on developing systems which minimised the information and paperwork required from employers and individuals. Several projects established IT based systems to enrol employers and employees in the WWSPI project. Most employers appeared to accept the requirements demanded of them as part of the WWSPI however some had reservations about certain aspects of the process (e.g. paperwork associated with Individual Training Plans required as evidence, problems with the slowness and reliability of IT based systems).

2.2.7 Monitoring, review and evaluation

The SSDA led on the evaluation and monitoring arrangements for the WWSPI (See section 1.2.1 for an overview). The SSDA also established a performance management system to monitor and review progress at the Programme level. The key elements were an IT based system which recorded activity on a real-time basis and reported progress against targets at regular intervals, regular monitoring

meetings between the SSDA and the SSCs and an operational group which met regularly to discuss implementation issues and share good practice. This group included representatives from each of the SSCs taking the WWSPI forward along with representatives from the WWSPI Steering Group such as DIUS, Women and Equality Unit and Trades Union Congress.

3 OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Summary

Outcomes and impact on the skills and training infrastructure

Evidence from this evaluation suggests that the aims of WWSPI have largely been realised. At a Programme level, WWSPI has provided an opportunity to forge greater connections between key national stakeholders and employers to further the policy drive towards employer-led training and to take forward the diversity agenda.

For the SSCs, a number of positive outcomes from the Programme are apparent including the use of SSA research to inform policy interventions; the scope to pilot and vary delivery methodologies; the ‘opening of employer doors’ that may otherwise have remained closed; the opportunity for increased dialogue with employers about the wider skills agenda; and raising the profile of both the SSC and of women’s equality issues amongst employers.

Outcomes and impact on the demand side

Evidence from the research suggests that a range of positive outcomes have emerged from the Programme at both an organisational and individual level. These include:

- *Financial lever for training* – access to subsidised / free training was identified by a number of employers as a positive outcome of WWSPI, one which enabled them to upskill members of staff with limited cost to the business.
- *Personal development and improved individual performance* – many interviewees identified personal development, contributing to improved individual performance within the business, as being the predominant outcome of their participation in WWSPI. Specifically, this involved increases in confidence, changes in their approach to work, and the utilisation of new skills.
- *Career progression* - employers participating in the research identified a small number of cases in which beneficiaries had achieved a tangible progression/promotion within their organisation. Some participants had experienced increased responsibility within their existing role.
- *Approaches to Human Resource Development (HRD)* – a number of employers indicated that involvement in WWSPI has impacted positively on their approach to HRD; had led to the introduction of qualifications and accredited learning; and had widened access to training within the organisation.
- *Approaches to equality and diversity* – there was a general view amongst employers and employees that the organisations in which they work operate fairly robust policies in terms of equality and diversity. This contrasts with the broader identification of persistent attitudes which may have a more indirect impact on women’s potential, more generally, in the world of work.

This section of the report draws on the qualitative interviews to discuss the outcomes and emerging impact of the WWSPI from two perspectives. Firstly based on the experiences of the publicly funded skills infrastructure developing and delivering the Initiative; and secondly the experiences of the employers and individual women participating in the Initiative.

3.1 Targets and outputs

The WWSPI has been embraced and driven forward by many people responsible for its development and implementation. It has been provided with impetus at various times by champions involved in the development and implementation of the WWSPI - working in partnership together - most noticeably in the early stages by DfES (Policy lead) and the SSDA (WWSPI coordinator) and more latterly the SSDA WWSPI coordinator and many of the SSC WWSPI project managers. Towards the end of the Programme it became apparent that the targets agreed with policy planners would be delivered and that the WWSPI was generally viewed as a 'success' on this basis. The vast majority of skills and training infrastructure stakeholders contributing to this research talk about WWSPI enthusiastically and view it as an exceedingly valuable intervention.

Table 3.1: WWSPI Outputs

SSC	Revised Targets	Achieved
Construction Skills	1400	2291
Lantra	1050	995
Skillfast-UK	900	871
Skills for Logistics	285	101
Asset Skills	1500	1638
IMI Automotive Skills	1500	1114
EU Skills	400	141
Improve Ltd	500	229
SEMTA	400	188
Total	7935	7568

Source: SSDA W&W Sector Pathways Initiative Performance Report 31 March 2008

The progress towards the targets has been very uneven and the vast majority of outputs were realised in the last quarter of the WWSPI. This is not uncommon in

initiatives like this (c.f. European Social Fund projects) where the time for development and setting up of projects is often longer than anticipated and impinges on the time available for delivery.

The targets associated with individual projects and interventions underpinning the Programme changed as the WWSPI was developed and implemented to ensure that the overall target of 7935 beneficiaries was met. Progress was regularly reviewed by the SSDA and individual SSCs and active management of the Initiative throughout implementation led to the reallocation of outputs from those struggling to achieve their original targets to those who were overachieving.

Two projects accounted for over half the total beneficiaries and there is considerable variation across the individual projects associated with the extent to which the revised targets have been met. For example one project achieved less than one third of its revised target, whilst other projects overachieved on their revised targets to a considerable degree. The reasons for this are complex and direct comparison of projects inadvisable given the different target beneficiaries, delivery methodologies and overall project aims. For example some projects were dependent upon achieving a qualification (in addition to the development of an ITP) and factors such as delays in being able to sit the examination adversely affected progress.

Although it is still relatively early to talk in terms of impact of the WWSPI there are many indications of both outcomes and emerging impact on stakeholders involved in the skills and training infrastructure, employers and individual women. Both the quantitative surveys (UKCES/IFF 2008) and the qualitative interviews with participants in this evaluation research reinforce this.

3.2 Outcomes and impact on the skills and training infrastructure

The aim of the Programme was to establish a small number of test bed projects providing innovative solutions to remove the barriers women face in getting on in the workplace and maximising their contribution to reducing skills gaps in the workforce. The evidence gained from documentary review and stakeholder interviews underpinning this evaluation suggest that these aims have been largely realised. Nine projects were established which provided a range of evidence-informed interventions seeking to address skills gaps and skills shortages which were in tune with the agenda set out by the Women and Work Commission.

A characteristic of the Programme is the broad range of ‘solutions’ (interventions) underpinning the Programme. Some of the fixed offer solutions were innovative in a range of ways:

- New SSC intervention for the sector
- Bespoke design to meet a need identified in the SSA
- Opportunities for market development (attracting ‘hard to reach’ employers e.g. SMEs)
- Use of employer engagement to inform labour market intelligence.

Determining the innovativeness of the flexible interventions is a challenge given the diversity of provision underpinning this approach. However the qualitative research uncovered evidence of providers who specialised in ‘bespoke intervention’ as well as providers who specialised in interventions specifically designed for women. Furthermore there have been interventions that have led to employer innovation in terms of organisational change (see below). For example employers participating in the qualitative research reported the introduction of coaching as a means of skills development and the use of training needs analysis for the first time.

3.2.1 Programme level

The qualitative interviews with stakeholders provide a further insight into the outcomes and impact on the training and education infrastructure that are many and varied. Skills and training infrastructure partners such as DIUS suggest that WWSPI has provided an opportunity to forge greater connections with employers to further the policy drive towards employer-led training and to take forward the Department’s diversity agenda.

For other partners at the Programme level the outcomes and impacts of WWSPI appear to be less clear-cut. The Learning and Skills Council was involved in the early stages of WWSPI development, however they rarely contributed to the ongoing implementation of the WWSPI and were largely absent from both the Steering Group and Operational Groups. This is not perceived to have had a detrimental effect on the implementation of WWSPI, but it has potentially limited its wider connections with the education and training infrastructure.

The interests of the Women and Work Commission were represented by the Women and Equality Unit in the early stages of the Programme and more recently by the

Government Equalities Office. These agencies have contributed to early stage Steering Group and Operational Group meetings and via email to WWSPI discussion documents, but rarely attended Steering Group Meetings (this has changed more recently with the active involvement of the Government Equalities Office representative in subsequent phases). The Trade Unions have been actively and positively involved at the strategic level, both at the programme level and in some SSC projects. However this involvement has not translated into effective delivery at the project level. The reasons for this appear many and varied and contingent upon a range of circumstances. Some sectors (e.g. IMI Automotive, Lantra) have very low union representation and the opportunity for union involvement may have been expected to be limited in these circumstances. In other instances there were issues associated with the expectations of the contribution of unions in specific projects that were not agreed in the development stages of the project and led to implementation conflicts between the union and the SSC. A further more fundamental dimension to the engagement of unions in the WWSPI is the different philosophies underpinning SSCs (employer-led) and Unions (employee-led), which it is reported, may lead to conflicts of interest between the two parties. There are however signs that interests are being reconciled and in some instances (notably Asset Skills and Skillfast-UK) the SSC and the relevant unions continue to discuss the potential of a mutually beneficial delivery partnership within WWSPI.

3.2.2 Employer-led training

For the the SSCs, WWSPI has had a number of positive outcomes and impacts. It provided an early opportunity to use the research underpinning the Sector Skills Agreements to inform the development of interventions to meet identified skills gaps and skills shortages. The design of the interventions has been influenced by both the SSA and often by key employers being engaged in the development process. A wide range of fixed-offer and open interventions were tested with employers and met with varying degrees of success that might be expected within the context of a pilot programme. The flexibility of the WWSPI provided SSCs with the scope to vary delivery methodologies, both within projects and within the Programme. For example, one SSC found flaws in their delivery model in the early stages of implementation and, working with the SSDA, agreed a change from a fixed offer to a flexible intervention.

The development of a range of projects to meet the needs of employers operating in each sector and the match-funding element of the WWSPI resulted in 'subsidised training' that was seen to help to 'open employer doors' which might otherwise remain closed (a view which appears to be generally endorsed by employers). This provided a vehicle to establish a dialogue with employers focused around the needs of the business, diversity issues and the provision of training. In some SSCs, this dialogue in turn provides a means of collecting further labour market intelligence associated with the needs of employers that can be used to inform the strategic development of sector-based intervention, as well as providing an opportunity to 'sell' the WWSPI intervention to the employer. Towards the end of WWSPI there was evidence of some employers becoming involved in a dialogue about the wider skills agenda for the first time. Several SSCs report that employers were willing to discuss other skills issues such as National Occupational Standards and apprenticeships as a result of their positive experience associated with WWSPI.

The WWSPI has provided an opportunity for SSCs and their partners to take forward diversity issues and raise the profile of both SSCs and women's equality issues with employers and members of the sector workforce. It has provided an opportunity to make the business case for diversity and to work with employers to realise the potential of women in their workforce to meet skills gaps and shortages, and resulted in a range of positive outcomes, as evidenced in the following section of this report and in the quantitative evaluation (UKCES/IFF 2008).

3.3 Outcomes and impact on the demand side

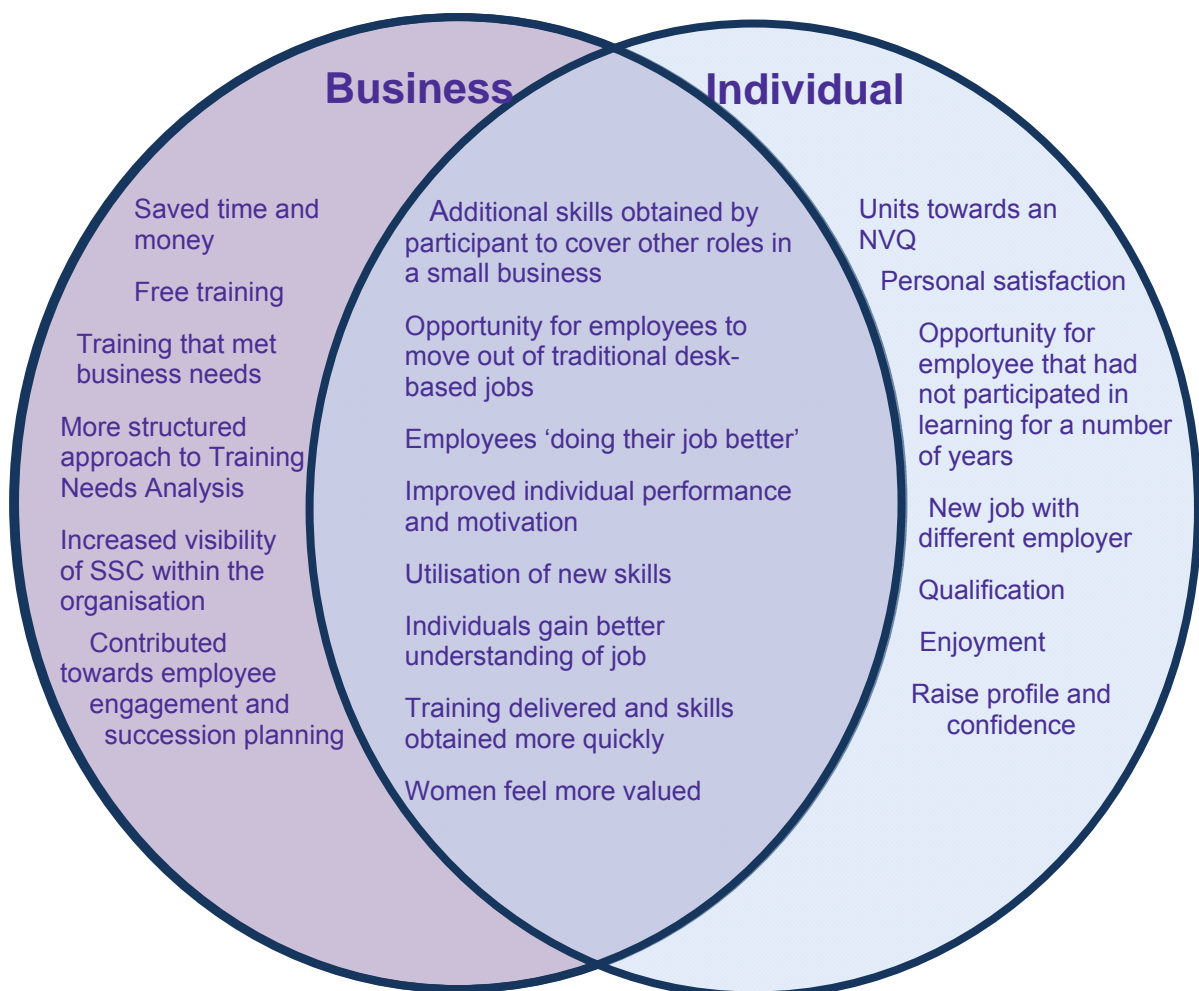
At the global level, WWSPI is seeking to remove barriers to women's progression, particularly into male dominated roles, within the workforce. Given the way in which the Programme is structured, the achievement of this is dependent on the bottom-up, cumulative effect of the SSC projects on individual women participants and their employers. Evidence from these suggests that a range of positive outcomes have emerged from the Programme at both an organisational and individual level. In common with many training interventions, outcomes have often been 'soft' in nature, presenting a challenge in terms of tangible evidence from an evaluation perspective. It is clear, however, that many participants welcomed the opportunities presented by the Programme, and recognise the benefits that their involvement has brought.

Figure 1 provides an indication of the range of outcomes identified by employers and individuals. The extent to which these outcomes have been experienced at the

individual or organisational level can be construed as significant in the overall achievement of programme level aims to challenge cultural norms. In this respect, the ability of projects to influence organisational processes and structures is key. However, the value of the Programme in facilitating increases in confidence and aspirations in individual participants should not be underestimated, bringing with it the potential dual benefits of improved performance in a current role; along with providing the foundation for development and progression in the future.

The range of outcomes for employers and individuals are discussed in more detail below.

Figure 1: Outcomes of training identified by interviewees



3.3.1 Financial lever for training

There is strong research evidence to suggest that employers perceive a range of barriers to investment in workforce development activities, with cost being one of the key determinants of participation. The provision, therefore, of highly subsidised, or,

in some cases, free training, can be significant in prompting business engagement. Access to subsidised/free training was indeed identified by a number of employers during the research as a positive outcome of WWSPI, one which enabled them to upskill members of staff at a lower financial cost to the business. The provision of training was frequently used to deliver development opportunities sooner than would otherwise have been the case or to a wider group of participants; in a small number of organisations the training was used to support staff amongst whom workforce development activity is usually limited; whilst in some others it was used to offset the costs of training that would not otherwise have been undertaken. For one employer participating in the qualitative research, the project enabled them to reinforce existing policies focussing on the recruitment of women into the business.

3.3.2 Personal development and improved individual performance within the business

The connection of WWSPI to policy developments relating to both the equality and skills agendas is clearly evident in terms of the design and development of the Initiative. These connections continue through to the outcomes of the Programme. There is a strong sense from the beneficiaries (both employers and individuals) that a significant outcome from participation has been in terms of the skills agenda; in particular, many interviewees identified personal development, contributing to improved individual performance within the business, as being the predominant outcome of their involvement. More specifically, interviewees highlighted increases in confidence (in terms of both the ability to do a current job, and, for some, the potential to take on greater responsibility); changes in approaches to work; and the utilisation of new skills; as a result of the Initiative. Both employers and individuals commented on these developments:

Employers

"It definitely resulted in a 'feel good factor' – we told them that it was match funded by the company – most of the women had never had any training before and there were noticeable increases in confidence and motivation – sales went up as well, though I'm not sure how much that was down to the training"

"I guess from our perspective what we have noticed is that certainly two of the individuals...are more questioning and seeking to understand some of the business decisions that they've made, even the ones they are not directly involved in"

"It has given them a broader approach and a better understanding of leadership"

Individuals

"[I learnt] how to report more professionally, learnt a lot more about myself and looking at the bigger picture – not just me and my little job"

"It's sort of that next step...I was doing the assistants role...whereas now I can actually just go ahead and do the letters and contracts...it's given me more of an understanding....I feel more confident now, whereas before I'd be like I've just got to check something...whereas now I feel happier saying to employees do this, that or the other, ...so I feel more confident in myself and able to do a better job really"

"[the course was] fantastic – I have taken away so much that I can implement in my work"

"I was quite motivated when I came out of mine...I was so excited...I had 2 days in London....sometimes you feel that you aren't doing as good a job as possible because you've got no benchmark...so your course is actually teaching you, yes, you are doing it correctly"

Whilst some employers recognised the links between this type of employee development and the contribution of this to the wider organisation (*"improving the individuals benefits the business"*), this was not universally the case. This, then, presents one of the challenges faced by those implementing interventions such as these, i.e. how to encourage businesses to engage when they perceive that it is individuals, rather than the organisation, that accrue the greatest benefit. It could also be argued that this illustrates precisely the need for this type of public support for training, based on the assumption that employers would be more reluctant to engage in skills development activities that they regard as more beneficial to the individual than to the business, if they have to fund it themselves.

One of the aims of the WWSPI is to address issues relating to both vertical and horizontal segregation within sectors and organisations. In this respect, the distinction between the projects that aim to support progression and those that aim to support recruitment is significant. The main focus of projects to support progression has been in relation to vertical segregation i.e. aiming to equip female employees with the skills to access more senior roles. These projects tend to support individuals to maintain and improve their current occupational trajectory, rather than providing opportunities for movement to alternative occupational roles which are currently dominated by male employees. The reverse tends to be the case in relation to the recruitment projects, the aim of which has been to give individuals the skills to work in a completely different sector (for example, construction or haulage), or at the very least in roles into which female recruitment has been traditionally limited. Evidence from the employers and individuals tends to reflect the dominance of progression-

type projects, indicating that personal development outcomes have largely been in relation to doing the same job better; gaining additional responsibilities within that role; or undertaking that (or a similar) role at a higher level.

Whilst this is generally the case, there are exceptions. One example of this is a female employee within a small haulage company who had previously focused on the administrative side of the business. This individual achieved her LGV licence as a result of participation in the project, thus developing an additional skill which, whilst not utilised on a full-time basis, enables her to contribute more widely to a range of tasks within the organisation.

3.3.3 Career progression

The achievement of, or potential for, career progression amongst individual beneficiaries is a key indicator for the WWSPI. These outcomes will be necessary if the Initiative is to have the wider desired impacts, as envisaged by the Women and Work Commission. They are, however, highly dependent on a range of factors including, amongst others, individual aspirations (and constraints, for example, childcare issues), as well as existing workplace structures. In addition, the timeframes associated with such progression are highly variable and can be considered to stretch beyond the scope of this research.

Evidence from the employers participating in this research indicates a small number of cases in which the individuals that had participated had achieved a tangible progression/promotion within their organisation. In the main, however, employers perceived that the participants are largely operating in the same occupational roles, although there may have been some increase in responsibility within the role, subsequent to participation in the project, for a number of individuals.

The observations of the employers in relation to this aspect were largely echoed by the individual participants. The majority were working in the same role as before they participated in WWSPI and were unsure about the extent to which their participation in the Initiative might impact on their potential for progression in the future. The impact of wider circumstances on the potential for progression was identified by one individual, who indicated that because she worked part-time she was unable to provide the commitment required within her organisation for employment in a more senior role.

A number of individuals were positive about the potential of the project to influence career development. One indicated that she had already achieved a promotion, and consequent wage increase, and that, if she had not participated in the WWSPI training, she would not have had the confidence to apply for the new job. This sentiment was echoed by one of her colleagues who commented *“if the right job came up I would be more prone to go for it now, whereas before I might have thought ‘I won’t be good enough for that’”*. Another individual identified the training as having had a significant impact on her position within her organisation, indicating that *“before I didn’t really know what I was talking about and made it up as I went along, but now I really do know. I have a major role in the company now”*.

The extent to which opportunities for progression exist within an organisation can also be a key determinant of potential outcomes. A number of employers and employees identified the relatively flat structure of the organisation within which they work as a barrier to progression for all individuals, not just female employees. For example:

“I report to the MD and [my colleague] also reports to the production director...[Another colleague] reports to me...it’s like dead man’s shoes here unfortunately...it’s like ‘when are you leaving I want to progress’...that’s not just the women, that’s the whole breadth of the business, all managers are limited unfortunately”

One outcome of this situation, identified by a couple of employers, was for the individuals that had participated in the training to obtain employment with alternative businesses in order to secure a promotion. This then demonstrates the double edged sword for employers, particularly those operating in a relatively flat hierarchical environment, as developing their staff can then have a negative impact on their ability to retain those skills within the business.

The potential for the type and scale of individual projects implemented through WWSPI to have a direct bearing on an individual's potential for progression was questioned by a couple of employers, suggesting the need for these interventions to be integrated into a longer-term, strategic approach to workforce development.

3.3.4 Employer approaches to HRD

The approaches adopted by employers to underpin skills acquisition are many and varied. In general, the impact and effectiveness of training is improved when it is part

of an approach to human resource development (HRD). In some (usually larger) organisations training is part of a wider systematic approach to HRD which provides a structure and framework within which skills acquisition and training activity has a key role to play. In other organisations (particularly the smallest SMEs) there is very little in terms of human resource development infrastructure and this impacts on the incidence and value of training.

Most of the employers contributing to the qualitative research underpinning this evaluation had at least some HRD systems in place. Many of the larger businesses (the majority of our sample) indicated the existence of a company-wide approach to training and development which included training needs analysis, individual development plans linked to business and departmental objectives and annual (or more frequent) appraisal processes.

Notwithstanding the relatively sophisticated approaches to HRD adopted by these employers, some employers contributing to the research identified areas where involvement in WWSPI projects had impacted positively on their approach to HRD. In this case the WWSPI had acted as an input from the external environment which caused the managers of the organisations to consider existing practice and, in some cases, led to the initiation of new or extended HR practices. This was more apparent in the flexible (as opposed to fixed) interventions underpinning WWSPI.

For example, employers variously reported the use of new analysis techniques such as training needs analysis or skills matrices which led to the identification of a need for training and stimulated demand for intervention. Employers also report organisational innovation in terms of delivery models used in WWSPI and the introduction of new approaches to skills development (for the employer) such as ICT based delivery or coaching. There are also indications of the introduction of development plans for individuals and departments to underpin and guide training activity and the contribution of the experience of implementing a flexible WWSPI to the training systems underpinning prospective ISO 9001 accreditation. One employer provides an example of this as illustrated below:

"It was also very useful to be honest to identify training in a proper training skills matrix...so its really very useful to think about training needs of individuals within the company and approach it in that way....I think in the past its been a little bit more ad hoc than that...I think it's quite useful as an exercise to do it"

WWSPI had also led to the introduction of qualifications and other accredited learning which was new to the business. Several women reported achieving a qualification in a range of fields and at various levels. The acquisition of qualifications was very much regarded as of benefit to the individual, rather than the organisation, with one employer commenting “*we were more interested in the content and development opportunity*”. In one organisation, three staff participated in the project, two of whom were already qualified to degree level, with the other one having last participated in education when she was sixteen. The employer of this individual felt that the achievement of a qualification was particularly significant, and resulted in a huge increase in her confidence.

Having completed her training, one interviewee indicated how this had contributed to her decision to continue with further learning:

“it gave me a little bit of a taste for writing essays...it gave me the idea that I’ve still got it in me to write an essay. I was at home and I somehow squeezed the time in to write an essay...suddenly it didn’t rule out that I could go on and do a degree”

There was further evidence in some employers of the widening of access to training opportunities to sections of the workforce, often in lower level occupations, who would not normally have an opportunity to be trained. There were examples of women contributing to the qualitative research where they had been given an opportunity to learn in the workplace for the first time, and for many this had stimulated interest in further learning and development opportunities.

3.3.5 Approaches to equality and diversity

Women face a variety of issues associated with barriers to progression in the workplace, evidenced by their limited representation in senior positions and the wage differentials that exist between male and female employees. Whilst there is strong evidence to support these conclusions, this global analysis appears to contrast with the experience of both the employers and the individual beneficiaries participating in the research. In particular, interviewees tended to differentiate between the specifics of the way that they perceive their organisation to operate (largely in-line with notions of equality and fairness); and the broader identification of persistent attitudes which may have a more indirect impact on women’s potential, more generally, in the world of work.

There was a general view amongst interviewees that the organisations within which they work operate fairly robust policies in terms of equality and diversity, evidenced by the existence (in all but one case) of written Equal Opportunities policies (although awareness of the detail and content of these was often limited). These were accompanied by a general view that gender is not taken into account in decision making processes:

Employers

"I treat everyone the same if they come for an interview – I don't care if it's a man or a woman"

"There are no obvious reasons why a man or a woman couldn't do any of the jobs – there are no barriers".

"Any employee that demonstrates competence and the appropriate attitude is given the opportunity to progress irrespective of gender"

Individuals

"I don't think we look at male and female...you just look at the skills they've got...you know how good they are at doing a particular job"

"It does go off in other places. You hear other people talk about it, but here they are pretty good, we have quite a lot of female top management"

The process of implementation and embedding of equal opportunities systems is, however, highly variable across organisations. The rigorous approach to this issue adopted within some businesses perhaps exposes the limitations of simply producing an Equal Opportunities Policy. In one example from the research, an employer implemented specific processes, which involved the development of an Internal Control Questionnaire that sets out standards across all departments, including for the training of managers in relation to recruitment, selection and absence management. Equal opportunities issues were addressed within all of these. They also provided diversity training workshops at various levels, which were incorporated within the overall training plan. The interviewee indicated that *"in practice, the idea that you have a policy and that's it is naïve"*.

High levels of commitment to the equality and diversity agenda were also apparent within another large organisation that has been proactive in relation to the recruitment and retention of female employees (a process which has sourced additional support through WWSPI). The employer, operating in a sector where

under representation of women (and particularly women in senior roles) is a longstanding issue, has a target to achieve a 30 per cent representation of females within their management by 2012. This organisation stressed the importance of ‘embedding’ females in an environment that is male dominated. In addition, specific efforts to promote the diversity agenda and encourage the employment of more female managers were explicitly identified by one individual in relation to her employer.

The objectives of the WWSPI include a desire to bring about culture change within organisations in relation to their approach to female employees. The majority of employers indicated that the impact of the Initiative has been limited in this respect, precisely because the philosophy of equality and diversity is already perceived to be well established within the business. However, there are other factors that can constrain outcomes, including, for example, the size of organisations within which the projects were delivered. One employer identified this as a potential barrier to impact:

“in a small company, it is possible that a course undertaken by one member of staff could have a major impact, but within a large organisation you would have to become a missionary for it to have that type of impact. There is an unwritten culture that this is already operating within the business”.

The potential for influence of WWSPI is significant within those sectors where there is an almost complete absence of women in particular roles, largely because any impact in relation to the Initiative will then be highly visible. One employer indicated that the Initiative had raised her awareness about women in the workplace more generally, something that she had not previously considered because *“we have never had any women apply....women get completely ignored in this industry”*. Another employer in the same sector suggested that the unique aspect about WWSPI was that it had allowed managers to offer training specifically to women, whereas previously they would have had to be proactive in requesting that training.

Within a number of sectors the changing nature of the job was identified as a factor which is opening up new opportunities for women, for example, the role of LGV driver has become less reliant on physical ability *“previously it was difficult for any woman to be able to physically manoeuvre it”*, and this was similarly the case in relation to certain roles in the automotive and textiles sectors.

Where impacts were identified, these were largely incremental. One employer indicated that the profile of women within the organisation had been raised slightly,

another that WWSPI had prompted discussion about equality issues. Other comments in relation to this included:

Employers

“it can only affect things round the edges – there are deep rooted issues which a small project like this cannot change”

“[we] already have an Equal Opportunities Policy and initiatives like this help to take it forward one step at a time – things change very slowly”

“there are layers of discrimination in any organisation, even if they are at a subtle level, in communication and office politics”

“This has helped us to be a bit more proactive...and to encourage people to do things that maybe we'd might have had to think twice about if we hadn't [got support from WWSPI]”

Whilst it was recognised that, within most of the businesses, many of the senior positions are held by male employees, there was a sense amongst some that this could change in the future. For example:

“if one female manager is employed and the male employees have respect for that individual, then it opens up the opportunity for other females to gain employment in those positions”

This, then, reflects the philosophy of the WWSPI, highlighting the potential to improve the overall position of women within the workplace through incremental steps that result in a higher proportion of female employees occupying influential roles within an organisation. Changing attitudes amongst different generations were also identified as contributing to the potential for increased visibility of women in more senior roles.

There was a sense from a number of interviewees that, whilst there is limited evidence of barriers within their specific organisations, wider societal factors remain influential on the potential for women to achieve equality with their male colleagues. Whilst one interviewee identified the challenges associated with obtaining part-time employment at middle managerial level; others suggested a range of wider issues including those associated with individual, rather than organisational perceptions; the benefits, as perceived by an employer, of recruiting male rather than female staff; and the persistence of certain out-dated notions within some sectors. All of these present a challenge to the achievement of objectives as identified by WWSPI.

Individuals

"Maybe if there is [any disadvantage due to gender] people put it there themselves because of, like, preconceptions about, oh if that job's advertised that's going to be a man that gets that one...but I don't know as a company...the company wouldn't say I'm not giving that job to a woman...or we're not giving that job to a man. I just think it is the mindset that 'that's a mans job...that's a woman's job'"

"the ideal is someone who is going to come to work, work late when needed, work early when needed, work weekends when necessary, will put in 150% when they are here, no distractions, no having to phone up the child minder...as less hassle as possible...employ a man, they're never going to get pregnant...9 times out of 10 if the child is sick the mother stays off with it...I know there are laws in place to stop that but it still doesn't stop people looking at a CV and tending towards others, and I don't think you're ever, ever going to stop that"

Employers

"there are dinosaurs still around in the industry....they can't see beyond the end of their nose"

3.3.6 Overall satisfaction

The extent to which employers and individuals are satisfied with the training with which they have engaged, and its perceived benefits, can be important factors influencing future decisions about workforce development; and therefore in maintaining business involvement with the education and training infrastructure. Employers and individuals were largely satisfied with the projects delivered through WWSPI in relation to a range of issues including design, content, delivery and quality of the training provider:

Employers

"The Programme has been very flexible which means that we can give individuals what they want...it is not tied to NVQs and it has been a fantastic way to engage the workforce...people like to feel that we are spending money on their development and it makes people happier and more productive"

The course was about..."looking inside yourself....bringing all the great things out about yourself"

"The trainer made the syllabus come alive...she used visual aids and props"

"The range of courses [team working, time management, introduction to employment law, improved performance through coaching] meant that there was something for everyone from the new starter receptionist to the women wanting to progress in management"

Whilst the overall reaction was a positive one, there were a number of interviewees that identified areas in which their experience of the project could have been improved. This largely related to course content, on the one hand in terms of the embedding of basic skills, although employers were very positive about the ability of the training provider to rapidly adapt the content of the course to make the basic skills element less explicit. On the other hand, the academic nature of some of the training was also a concern. The importance of ensuring that training of this nature is directly linked to work-related issues was identified in relation to both of these. The level of paperwork associated with participation, and the demands that this placed on employers was also raised as a further issue.

4 SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

Summary

Emerging from the research is a range of issues that have implications for policy in taking forward the Women and Work and Leitch agendas. These include:

Women and Work Commission

The recruitment element of WWSPI projects are largely acknowledged as presenting the greatest challenge to those delivering WWSPI, and experienced varying degrees of success. Whilst these were closest to the original aims of the Budget announcement of 2006, the Programme led by sector interests evolved to provide a framework that supported the progression of women in the workplace. This is potentially a key outcome which can contribute to a reduction in the pay gap between male and female employees. Overall, WWSPI is recognised as a useful 'stepping stone' towards the culture change desired by the Women and Work Commission, but there remain challenges associated with how to encourage the diversity agenda at the organisational and sector level.

Leitch

WWSPI can be seen to make a major contribution to the demand-led training agenda by providing an opportunity to support women to progress in the labour market, and by supporting employers to address skill gaps and shortages through the provision of evidence-based interventions. Key points in relation to this agenda are:

- *Engaging employers* - a range of issues relating to the engagement of employers are identified including the merits of targeting organisations of different sizes; the degree of additionality and deadweight associated with the intervention; and the potential added value to be accrued from SSC employer engagement.
- *Engaging individuals* – targeting employees that will have the greatest impact in terms of the objectives of the WWSPI is a significant challenge, particularly in relation to choices between those that have the most potential to progress, or those most at risk of disadvantage in terms of pay and conditions.

Sustainability

The phase 1 WWSPI, which is the focus of this evaluation, ran from 2006-08, with further funding being available for subsequent phases in 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11. The characteristics of WWSPI, in terms of its relatively limited funding and timebound nature, means that tapping into the wider education and training infrastructure is central to its longer-term impact on both the equality agenda and demand-led training. In this respect, the WWSPI needs to make further connections with a range of both current and potential partners and funding mechanisms.

The knowledge and experience of those involved in developing and implementing WWSPI suggest a range of actions which should underpin the development of the Initiative in the future. These include the identification of a number of factors which can help to support successful implementation of subsequent phases at both the programme and project level relating to: developing the Programme/project infrastructure; partnership working; project design; employer engagement; and adding value.

This section of the report reviews the qualitative evidence and suggests some policy implications arising from the evaluation.

4.1 Women and Work Agenda

There was common agreement amongst stakeholders contributing to the evaluation research that the Women and Work Commission had set a valuable agenda in terms of the cultural change for women's pay and opportunity it aspires to. This agenda was particularly challenging in terms of the relatively small amount of resources and short timeframe associated with WWSPI.

All the stakeholders suggested that WWSPI led to the establishment of a set of projects in tune with the policy direction set by the Women and Work Commission. The WWSPI crystallised into a programme with three broad objectives (i) increasing entry and retention levels in sectors where women were under-represented (ii) improving opportunities for career progression (iii) cultural change through engaging employers to overcome barriers faced by women.

4.1.1 The balance between recruitment, progression and cultural change

The first objective – increasing entry and retention levels in sectors where women are under-represented - is nearest to the original emphasis of the Budget announcement in 2006. Progress towards this was mixed in the Programme and contingent upon a range of factors associated with, for example, the drivers of activity in each sector, target groups and intervention type. One of the most successful projects adopted a flexible approach to delivery and focussed on attracting professional women to occupations where they already have a presence, within the context of a sector where women have been under-represented for many years. However, several projects with a recruitment strand struggled to engage sufficient women. Where the WWSPI met with some success was in supporting employers to provide training for newly recruited women. This benefited the individual (in terms of the range of induction training provided and their views of the commitment of their new employer to their development); and the employer through improved morale and likely retention of newly recruited staff.

The second objective – improving opportunities for career development - has emerged as the central focus for WWSPI. The evidence and practicalities suggests this as an equally important factor (vis a vis recruitment) in taking the agenda of the Women and Work Commission forward. Indeed improving the opportunities for career progression across the sectors is seen to make a key contribution to overcoming the gender pay gap. The Second Report of the Select Committee on Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform welcomed initiatives to encourage women into more senior positions such as those developed through WWSPI and the evidence provided by the quantitative evaluation (UKCES/IFF 2008) will provide a useful benchmark of the contribution of WWSPI in this respect.

The Women and Work Commission identifies the need for a change in culture to realise the potential contribution of women, highlighting both access to male dominated sectors and progression in work as key themes. WWSPI is generally seen as a training intervention aimed at women (as opposed to an intervention focussed on the equality agenda). In this way it is used as a 'hook' to engage employers who might otherwise resist involvement in interventions which seek to take the equality agenda forward. It has supported progress towards the challenging longer-term objective of culture change by engaging both employers and individual women in skills development activity to improve employment prospects and meet skills shortages and gaps. The emphasis of WWSPI has been on the individual women benefiting from the Initiative with less attention paid to the organisational conditions and wider societal values and norms which contribute to the gap in women's pay and opportunity. The relatively small-scale project based interventions, whilst beneficial to individuals and individual employers, are unlikely – in the short-term - to have a wider impact on the employment profile of the sector as a whole. Nevertheless, WWSPI is viewed as a considerable success by many stakeholders involved in the development and delivery of the Initiative and it is generally recognised as a useful 'stepping stone' towards the change in culture desired by the Women and Work Commission. It provides a foundation for further development and this evaluation suggests that one of the challenges for policy more generally is how to encourage the equality and diversity agenda at the organisational and sector level to ensure that the outcomes of WWSPI for individual women and employers are sustained and contribute to further cultural change.

4.2 Demand-led training

The Leitch Review of skills set a further challenging agenda for public policy requiring the training system to become genuinely responsive to employers and individual learners. The WWSPI can be seen to make an important contribution to this agenda through both providing an opportunity to support women to progress in the labour market through the development of skills; and secondly for employers to address skills gaps and skills shortages affecting the development of their enterprises. A wide range of projects and interventions have been developed under WWSPI which have often placed employer interests at the heart of development and implementation. The approach adopted by the WWSPI has encouraged a range of flexible and fixed-offer interventions connected to the interests of employers operating in specific sectors of the economy.

The evidence suggests that the approaches adopted have generally led to a high level of satisfaction amongst employers participating in the Initiative. However there is some variation associated with performance in terms of project implementation and meeting output targets, which is to be expected within the context of a diverse pilot programme. The qualitative research underpinning this evaluation has highlighted a range of positive outcomes for both the organisations and individual women beneficiaries and the evidence provided by the quantitative evaluation (UKCES/IFF 2008) provides a useful indication of the scale and scope of a range of outcomes at the organisational and individual level and provides further evidence of the emerging impact of WWSPI.

4.2.1 Engaging employers – focus, additionality, displacement and deadweight

The WWSPI has been dependent upon engaging employers as a route to individual beneficiaries. The approach to delivery was often focused on employers who already had some relationship with the SSCs and who were likely to be responsive to the Initiative. The WWSPI targets for individual participation provided a further incentive for SSCs to focus on larger employers that could deliver ‘large numbers of participants’. There were some indications that the strategy of concentrating on larger employers did not always result in the expected outcomes. Internal communication within large employers may be slow and not be effective in spreading the WWSPI message. On the other hand, small employers tend to take more work to engage in the first place and necessitate working through intermediaries and

networks. They may also only be able to 'deliver' small numbers of participants. However decision-making processes within small organisations tend to be straightforward and can lead to a relatively quick engagement process. The WWSPI suggests that employer engagement processes are often resource intensive and uncertain and contingent upon a range of factors including the structure of the sector, the nature of the intervention and target group and the approaches and attitudes of employers towards publicly-funded training.

A further issue associated with approaches to employer engagement is the additionality and deadweight associated with intervention. This is clearly related to, for example, the extent to which the funding provided through WWSPI was used by employers to provide additional training (as opposed to displacing activity which is already planned and resourced). Many SSCs were aware of the need to minimise this and steps were taken to encourage employers to offer additional training. The qualitative research suggested that employers had done this to varying degrees, however issues associated with additionality and deadweight need to be continually monitored and reviewed to ensure that the added value which may be associated with WWSPI is realised to its full potential.

There are clearly benefits associated with the development of the role of SSCs and the employer voice they contribute to the training and skills infrastructure. The qualitative research revealed some evidence of organisations engaging with SSCs for the first time as a result of the WWSPI who were beginning to think about getting involved with other programmes (such as Apprenticeships and National Occupational Standards) and to recommend the Initiative to other employers. There were further illustrations of added value in terms of the introduction of some HRD practices which go some way to establishing the systems and procedures necessary to support skills acquisition in organisations on a systematic basis. Whilst it is too early to suggest how widespread these developments are, it is clear that the Initiative has provided SSCs with a vehicle to engage directly with employers, demonstrate that they can make a difference to the provision of training and engage employers in discussions associated with other workforce development activity. Capturing these successes and promoting their benefits will be important for sustaining momentum within individual employers and the sector more generally and is critical to supporting progression towards the desired culture change.

4.2.2 Engaging individuals

The route to individual women through employers brings with it some interesting challenges. On the one hand for those employers circulating the opportunities more widely (often based on fixed offer interventions) it brings challenges associated with managing the negative effects on the male workforce of positive action in favour of women. There was anecdotal evidence from participating employers that this may have put some employers off becoming involved in WWSPI, consequently limiting the potential market and individual access to the opportunities presented by the Initiative. However there was little evidence from participating employers associated with adverse impacts on the male workforce and a couple of examples of positive impacts where employers had made the training opportunities open to male employees as well as female beneficiaries. In many cases this process led to both employers and employees to consider equal opportunities issues which until WWSPI had not previously been high on their agenda.

Reflecting on the development and implementation of WWSPI suggests some interesting tensions associated with wider policy objectives associated with the skills and diversity agendas. For example Leitch suggested that the state should concentrate its help on those who were least likely to be able to pay for their own training or to be trained by their employers, however it would appear that some of the greatest benefits in terms of narrowing the pay gap come from training interventions seeking to improve the skills of professionals and associate professionals who are already amongst those in the workforce most likely to benefit from training provided by employers. This policy tension and the balance of WWSPI activity needs to be carefully considered within the future development and implementation of the WWSPI. Its role as an employer-led intervention needs to be considered amongst alternative interventions which may target those women at most risk of labour market disadvantage, such as part-time women and women returners, as part of the wider Women and Work or Welfare to Work agendas. The qualitative evidence from both employers and employees is mixed with some employers engaging women from groups at risk of disadvantage in the labour market because of their low level of qualifications, others engaging women qualified to level 4 and above and still others engaging women from both groups.

The qualitative research with individual beneficiaries highlighted the potential for progression in terms of learning which many women had recognised as a product of their involvement in WWSPI. However with a few exceptions WWSPI does not allow funding for the same individual for a second time to support additional training. The expectation of policy planners is that employers and/or individuals will fund further training once they have seen the benefit of it, however the qualitative evidence suggests that this is often not the case and there is a risk that the short-term impact of WWSPI as a catalyst or enabler of development activity is not carried through in the longer-term. To achieve the desired cultural change associated with the equality and demand-led training policy agendas, further input from other sources to sustain the trajectory of change will be required.

4.3 WWSPI Sustainability

SSCs working with others have a key role to play promoting what works for employers in terms of diversity, while also tackling the skills infrastructure. The WWSPI has supported this through: the use of labour market analysis and the SSA; promoting the business case for diversity; developing and implementing interventions to improve sector specific gender imbalances; supporting women into management; improving employer HR practices; and tailoring training interventions to meet the needs of employers. However, the characteristics of WWSPI in terms of its relatively limited funding and timebound nature mean that tapping into the wider infrastructure is central to its longer-term impact on both the equality and demand-led training agendas. Central to this is that WWSPI needs to make further connections with a range of both current and potential partners and funding mechanisms.

A range of partners have been involved in the development and implementation of phase 1 of the WWSPI. It would appear that there are opportunities for both wider and deeper engagement of several of these. For example, whilst the Trade Unions have been supportive at the strategic level, individual projects have struggled to translate this into a mutually beneficial delivery arrangement at the project level. There are indications that this situation is changing in phase 2 of WWSPI, however there remain opportunities to make better connections between the Initiative and Trade Unions, particularly through Union Learning Representatives who may be able to target people at risk of disadvantage in the workplace with low skills or low confidence in their own ability to learn and benefit from training. Other partners such as the Government Equalities Office are emerging to play an active role in the further

development and implementation of subsequent phases of the Programme through, for example, the WWSPI Steering and Operational Groups.

One of the biggest challenges facing WWSPI is associated with sustainability and the extent to which it provides a foundation for further development in terms of individual progression. The Initiative provides an opportunity to work with employers to establish career pathways and to encourage succession planning which are important organisational conditions to support progression. It provides individual women with an input to support skills acquisition and appears to have engendered or reignited a willingness to learn amongst some women. However without further publicly funded support this foundation for development is at risk of being undermined as there is evidence that neither individual women nor employers will be willing to fund further investment in skills without some level of public support.

A longstanding policy challenge is associated with providing a 'seamless' service to employers and the Simplification of Skills System is a key element in engaging employers and unlocking the demand for training (UKCES 2008). With much of the funding for training being routed through an increasingly flexible Train to Gain offering there is a major opportunity to be grasped in terms of improved connection with the LSC. SSCs can provide a route to employers who have benefited from WWSPI and individual learners who may be interested in further progression and would benefit from access to other policy interventions such as Train to Gain and Learner Accounts to support further learning. The LSC Agenda for Change (2008) with its renewed emphasis on empowering FE Colleges to work more closely with businesses that have urgent training needs also has the potential to link closely with WWSPI. The qualitative research revealed several examples of potential connections between both individuals and employers and Colleges of FE which could have been made through the WWSPI given different time constraints and these may remain open through the WWSPI employer relationship.

4.4 Learning from experience

The phase 1 WWSPI which is the focus of this evaluation ran from 2006-2008 and provided a challenging timeframe to establish and deliver the intervention. The WWSPI is being taken forward in three more phases 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11

with the continued funding reflecting the success and value of the intervention. The quantitative research complementing this qualitative research provides further evidence of its contribution and success (UKCES/IFF 2008). The qualitative research provides an opportunity to reflect on the successes and identify areas to consider in the further development and potential mainstreaming of the Programme.

The knowledge and experience of those involved in developing and implementing the WWSPI suggest a range of actions which should underpin the development of the Initiative in the future. These are listed below in terms of issues to be considered at the Programme level and the project level:

4.4.1 Programme level

- Maintain a flexible programme framework encouraging innovative design and enabling projects to vary delivery if more effective ways of meeting employer interests are recognised during implementation.
- Continue to support the Operations Group as a means of programme review, sharing experience and good practice and making connections with the wider training and education infrastructure.
- Continue to develop the employer/learner database to reduce local administration, employer form-filling and support the monitoring and evaluation of the intervention. Ensure that information requirements are specified as soon as possible and try to keep requests for additional information from employers to a minimum.
- Work with partners to identify alternative funding streams and develop a 'seamless service' for employers to facilitate further learning opportunities for women.
- Support interventions which seek to minimise deadweight and displacement and aim to add value through, for example, connecting with employers not already engaged in substantial training activity and/or pursuing the equality agenda.
- Whilst recognising the realities of current funding limits, there would appear to be major benefits in terms of intervention design, development and implementation attributable to a two-three year rolling programme which provides space for more effective partnership development and the

development of interventions such as mentoring and support networks which help to sustain activity in the long-term.

4.4.2 Project Level

- Design projects which contain an element of career planning and resources for skills development to start the individual on a 'learning journey'.
- Establish and adequately resource a small core project team (Project director, project coordinator and administration support) to take the project forward as soon as possible.
- Identify and engage key staff in the SSC (e.g. employer facing staff) and ensure that they are aware of the benefits to employers that the WWSPI project brings. Share skills and knowledge with these staff on an ongoing basis and not just at the outset of the project.
- Ensure that key partners (e.g. training providers, trade unions, employers) are engaged at an early stage and contribute to the development and review of the intervention through steering groups/regular meetings.
- Develop a strategic approach to employer engagement, identifying key employers and intermediaries at an early stage and engaging them in the WWSPI. This can be a time consuming and resource intensive process so be prepared (where appropriate) to develop relationships with key large employers at various levels (e.g. head office/regional/local and/or HR/Line managers as appropriate) to enable access to learners.
- Develop marketing materials which clearly outline the process and the nature (and benefits) of the intervention.
- Identify and target key network events to get the message to employers and engage employers as champions to promote the Initiative.
- Work with employers to ensure that WWSPI activity does not displace their existing investment in training. Careful and sensitive monitoring and audit is required to see this through.
- Use the relationship established through successful delivery of WWSPI to engage employers in discussions around wide workforce development issues such as NOS and apprenticeships and facilitate access to other funding.
- Establish appropriate performance management systems, employer engagement incentives and evaluation activities.

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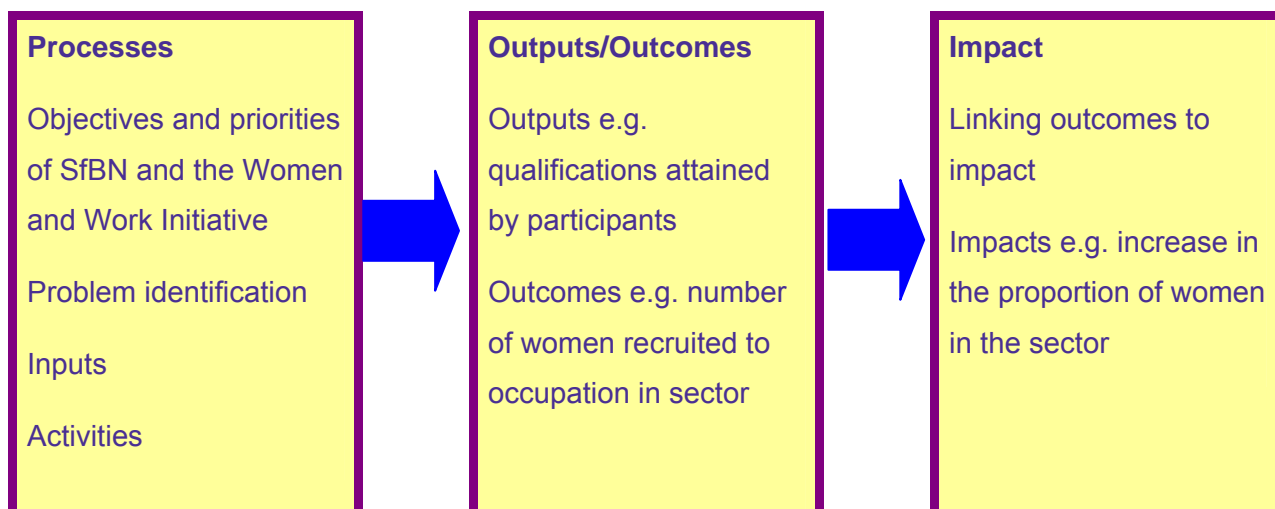
APPENDIX 1: EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The framework for the evaluation was developed to reflect the logic chain for the Initiative that was identified by the SSDA. The logic chain identifies a number of stages in the development of the Programme, all of which will require examination during the evaluation process. Key stages include:

- Objectives and priorities of the Skills for Business network and the Women and Work Initiative
- Problem identification
- Inputs
- Activities
- Outputs
- Outcomes
- Linking outcomes to impact
- Impacts.

These stages have been 'collapsed' to focus on three areas, namely: processes; outputs/outcomes; and impact, as identified in the framework set out below.

Outline evaluation framework for the Women and Work Sector Pathways Initiative





APPENDIX 2: METHODOLOGY

Methodology

This evaluation consists largely of qualitative primary research undertaken in two phases. Phase 1 followed WWSPI developments up until July 2007 and resulted in an interim report (SSDA/PRI 2007). The interim report was based on a review of the background literature and documentation regarding the development and implementation of the Initiative; a review of the individual SSC project proposals; interviews with key national stakeholders; and qualitative research with four of the WWSPI projects taken forward by SSCs (Construction Skills, Improve, Lantra, Skillfast-UK).

This final report presents the findings from phase 2 of the evaluation and shifts the emphasis from a focus on the implementation process to a focus on outcomes and learning/implications. It is based on further qualitative interviews with national stakeholders, along with stakeholders and beneficiaries of the projects delivered by all nine SSCs involved in WWSPI (i.e. the four SSCs included in phase 1 of the research, plus Asset Skills, EU Skills, IMI Automotive, Skills for Logistics and SEMTA).

Table a.1 shows the total number of interviews undertaken with each set of stakeholders. Interviews were undertaken between September – November 2008.

Table a.1: Evaluation interviews

Stakeholder	Total no. of interviews (phase 1 and phase 2)
Project development and delivery (e.g. SSCs, training providers)	42
Employers	42
Individual beneficiaries	47
National stakeholders (e.g. DIUS, SSDA/UKCES, TUC)	11

Phase 2 qualitative research

The qualitative research involved a review of relevant documentation (including Sector Skills Agreements for each SSC, as well as project applications), interviews with those delivering the projects (including the SSCs and training providers) and interviews with beneficiaries, including employers and employees. Discussion guides

for the interviews with each of the different stakeholder groups were drafted and agreed with the SSDA.

Interviews were initially undertaken with representatives of each of the SSCs that were delivering projects. Whilst the original intention was to differentiate between progression and recruitment strands delivered by some of the SSCs, in practice the distinction between the two was less significant than anticipated. As such, the interviews with SSCs tended to cover all of the WWSPI activity, rather than focusing on specific strands. These interviews covered a range of issues including:

- Project objectives
- Project delivery
- Progress and outcomes
- Added value
- Sustainability
- What works?

Subsequent interviews were undertaken with training providers to establish their role in terms of design, development and delivery of the project; along with their views in relation to the key outcomes achieved.

This phase of the research involved a substantial amount of fieldwork with employers and employees that had participated in WWSPI. The beneficiary element of the research 'piggy backed' onto a quantitative survey undertaken during summer 2008 by IFF Research. During the quantitative survey, employers were asked if they would be willing to participate in further research. The details of those that agreed to do so were obtained from IFF and selection of employers for the qualitative research was then taken from this sample. Contacts for individual beneficiaries were obtained through their employers.

A combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews, along with a number of focus groups, were undertaken with beneficiaries. The model adopted for this element of the research was to undertake a number of site visits to participating employers. During the visits, face-to-face interviews were carried out with business representatives (largely line managers or Human Resource staff) who were able to provide an employers' perspective on the delivery and outcomes of the projects; and a focus group was held with a number of female beneficiaries in order to ascertain their views about participation. Additional employer interviews were undertaken over

the telephone; and where it was not possible to organise focus groups, further individual interviews were also undertaken over the telephone.

National stakeholders

A combination of telephone and face-to-face interviews were carried out with national stakeholders representing a range of organisations including:

- Sector Skills Development Agency / UK Commission for Employment and Skills
- Department for Education and Skills / Department for Innovation Universities and Skills
- Trades Union Congress
- Women and Equality Unit.

In phase one of the research, the focus of these interviews was in relation to the development and implementation of the Programme. In phase two, the focus was on the outcomes of WWSPI.

Analysis and reporting

Information obtained through all of these interviews was collated and analysed, providing the basis for this report.

APPENDIX 3: LEARNING WORKSHOP DISCUSSION SUMMARY



Qualitative evaluation of Women and Work Sector Pathways Initiative
Learning workshop 9th December 2008
Discussion notes

Following a presentation of findings from the research, a group discussion was held, structured around a series of key questions arising from the evaluation. The questions related to one of two themes: Connections to the Women and Work Agenda; and Demand-led Training. Below we summarise the main comments made during the discussion in relation to each of these questions.

Connections with the Women and Work Agenda

1. *To what extent is WWSPI a training intervention focused on women or an intervention to encourage diversity/equality amongst employers? Should there be a greater emphasis on employers approaches to diversity? What are the key barriers to be overcome? What might work in these circumstances?*

- Training is the hook that engages employers – if the Initiative is ‘sold’ as relating specifically to the diversity agenda, then employers may be more reluctant to participate. It is helpful to use the training offer as a vehicle to promote the diversity agenda.
- Once employers are engaged, the impact of the training on the workplace needs to be well publicised, otherwise momentum is lost. This is the only way for the desired culture change to be achieved.
- Greater follow-up of the training is required with longer-term initiatives such as mentoring being put in place. This does, however, present challenges for a timebound programme. Construction Skills are looking at developing a mentoring programme, but this needs to be funded for more than one year.
- In order for continuity to be achieved, linkages need to be developed with other funding streams and programmes, e.g. Train 2 Gain.

2. *There appears to be a WWSPI emphasis on progression - is this generally recognised and accepted? Should WWSPI pay more attention to recruitment and/or culture change? What are the key barriers to be overcome?*

- This should be driven by market forces in each individual sector. In some sectors, recruitment is a key issue; in others the focus needs to be on retraining to develop new skills within the sector.
- The recruitment element of WWSPI is particularly challenging because individuals need to be employed by someone in order to attract the funding.
- Progression is an easier concept for employers.
- A ‘seamless’ offering needs to be made to employers whereby women are recruited through other supported programmes (eg T2G) and can then progress into training supported through WWSPI. The employers do not need to know that this is coming from different funding streams. Barriers relating to the rules and regulations about where one initiative stops and another starts need to be overcome. The SSCs have a key role to play in engaging with more than one initiative, but making it appear seamless.

- There are important roles to consider for other organisations including Jobcentre Plus and education providers including Universities and Colleges.
- It is a difficult time for recruitment because of the current economic climate.
- Progression has a bigger impact on the male/female pay gap than recruitment.

3. *Are some particular skills (e.g. management, supervisory, technical, basic) more effective than others in improving women's pay and opportunity? If so which ones and why? Should WWSPI reflect this?*

- This varies between sectors and, again, needs to be market driven.
- SSCs Labour Market Information needs to focus on understanding the drivers for Women and Work within their sector – leading to a smarter approach to where the money goes.

4. *How can programme or project design support desired changes in emphasis? What needs to be done (and by whom)?*

- The evaluation of phase 2 needs to expand on that undertaken for phase 1 – it needs to assess whether the key lessons learnt from phase 1 are being taken forward in phase 3. The timing of the phase 1 evaluation is important – it will be published just as the phase 3 bids are being written.

5. *What are the longer term implications of WWSPI for stakeholders? Do other organisations need to be engaged? Is WWSPI sustainable? If yes how? If no why not?*

- The LSC need to be involved (particularly in order to develop programme linkages)
- UKCES are considering ways to involve the other nations
- Union involvement could be strengthened at a project level – this should be done through senior representation on project steering groups rather than from the bottom up with ULRs.
- FE colleges – Skillfast are currently working with 2 or 3 colleges to develop bespoke standards for their programme. The academic calendar is a potential constraint on this type of activity.
- Sustainability and culture change go hand in hand.
- There isn't sufficient funding for WWSPI to be able to support all of the SSCs to the extent that they may want it. This is where links to other programmes become important.
- Other potential options for funding include: Union Learning Fund; Train to Gain (including sector compacts at levels 3 and 4); and ESF. There is also potential to use providers as a vehicle to access alternative funding.

Demand-led training

6. What changes (if any) are required to support employer engagement?

- This, again, is a sectoral issue and varies from SSC to SSC.
- Construction Skills is currently working with a college to develop a training course across England which they hope will open opportunities up to SMEs.
- SSCs that have already developed projects through WWSPI need to share best practice and lessons learned with those coming into the Initiative for the first time.

7. Is more effective targeting possible/desirable in terms of e.g. priority groups such as ethnic minorities, women returners or employers (e.g. SMEs)?

- This depends on whether specific groups are an issue for the sector.
- IFF report indicates that a large proportion of women that benefited from phase 1 were in managerial roles – is this an issue? Within the Construction sector the large majority of women are employed in professional rather than trades roles, so this is where the focus on progression has to be made.

8. What steps can be taken to minimise deadweight and displacement (especially employer activity that would have taken place anyway)?

- This depends on what happens to the money that employers save by not having to fund the training themselves – if it goes to support other training or development then that is ok.
- Construction Skills is working with employers to try to ensure additionality. This was more difficult in phase 1 because it was so target driven.

9. Does WWSPI support learning progression? If so how? What are the key barriers to progression? How are these overcome? Is there a relationship between informal learning and accreditation? Any examples? How can this be improved?

- The issue about 'secondary' funding (ie providing funding for the same individual for a second time to support additional training) has been discussed in detail at operations groups meetings – this is not permitted by the funding, except on a case by case basis (if an employer is likely to bring in a significant number of 'new' participants, but also wants to fund one or two that have previously been supported).
- Employers should be funding further training after the first funding has been provided – this is where culture change should kick in.
- The connection to T2G is again important. The Adult Advancement and Careers Service also has a significant role to play. Skills Accounts should also be used to encourage the bottom up approach.

10. What is the value to be added through better connection with other interventions (e.g. T2G, NOS)? Any examples?

- These linkages were identified as critical in relation to a number of issues including: sustainability; expansion; progression; and presenting a seamless package to employers.