

Project acronym: HTS

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Invest NI Collaborative Network – 1 March 2017 – 30 June 2019

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Section One: Executive Summary

"Thank you for inviting us to the seminar today it was informative and a good insight into the needs and of our local employers as well as the labour market." [Feedback on PR of HR from a public sector representative]

"A really useful afternoon spent engaging with careers teachers from across the country about career and development opportunities available at Dunbia. Events like this are a fantastic way of getting word out to key people about this fantastic business and industry, and showing them the range of roles involved in getting food from farm to fork!" [Feedback on Futures in Food from a private sector representative]

How the project came about in the first place (recognitions of the skills challenged faced by the sector)

This industry-led project was initiated in response to, and in recognition of, skills challenges being faced by the Northern Ireland Food and Drink sector in 2015. A well-trained workforce is a fundamental requirement for companies, in order to maximise efficiency and effectiveness and achieve sustained growth. A number of Food and Drink businesses came together to form a Skills and Sector Attractiveness Pilot Group, (which will hereafter be referred to as the "Pilot Group"), to address the issues on a collaborative basis. [A full list of Scoping Study Pilot Group Members is contained in **Appendix 6.**]

Decision to carry out a Scoping Study

It was reported that issues surrounding employment were being experienced by several Food and Drink businesses across the region of Northern Ireland. In order to investigate issues around the skills profile and sector attractiveness of the Northern Ireland Food and Drink industry, the Pilot Group conducted a Scoping Study with the support of Invest NI. The six-month Scoping Study was initiated in July 2015 (and was completed in January 2016).

As part of the Scoping Study, the Pilot Group undertook to conduct two surveys:

- one for industry HR departments to investigate issues surrounding skills gaps, training and recruitment;

- the other was tailored to Northern Ireland students to examine the “attractiveness” of the Food and Drinks sector.

The student survey was designed for analysis of student perceptions of industries as prospective “employers of choice” and to identify tools that might improve the perceptions of students and those who may advise and influence them.

Findings from the Scoping Study

The Scoping Study highlighted a number of skills and recruitment issues and challenges within the workforce. Examples of the findings include:

- the industry’s increase in demand for employees was not being met by the insufficient number of candidates applying for vacancies
- there were difficulties, reportedly, finding applicants with the requisite skills but training costs were also reported as prohibitive
- generally, the wider community in Northern Ireland seemed to have a poor perception and a lack of understanding about agriculture and food

Phase 2 application

In order to identify solutions, in Autumn 2016 the Pilot Group applied for an Invest NI Collaborative network 2nd phase grant to enable them to take forward the findings of the scoping study. The on-going skills and recruitment challenges being faced by the Northern Ireland Food and Drinks industry were not being addressed as effectively as they could be.

It was proposed to initiate a project covering a 24-month period (from March 2017) that would establish a collaborative SME network across the Agri-Food sector to strategically address the skills issues within the sector.

This network of SMEs, it was proposed, would work in conjunction with a range of industry stakeholders within the area of Careers, Recruitment, Upskilling and Economic Development.

The application for an Invest NI Collaborative network 2nd phase grant was successful, and a Letter of Offer was received in February 2017. NIFDA would like to note its appreciation of Invest NI support.

Steering Committee

The recruitment of the HTS Network members was drawn, in the first instance, from membership of the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association (NIFDA). A Steering Committee was set up on 24 April 2017 to provide oversight of the project. The Steering Committee was comprised of:

Brian Irwin, Chairman, Irwin’s Bakery

Declan Billington, CEO, Thompsons Feeds

Tony O’Neill, Group Deputy Chief Executive, Dunbia

Ursula Lavery, Technical and R&D Director Europe, Moy Park

Tracy Hamilton, Director, Mash Direct

Peter Henry, General Manager, Allied Bakeries Ireland

Michael Howard, Managing Director, SHS (NI)

Nick Wheelan, Group Chief Executive, Dale Farm

Launch of Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills (HTS) Collaborative Network

On 2nd May 2017 the Skills and Sector Attractiveness Pilot Group, the nucleus of companies who had been involved in the original Scoping Study and several new members attended a Kick-Off Meeting at Invest Northern Ireland in Belfast.

The Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills (HTS) Food and Drink Collaborative Network was formally launched on 2nd May 2017. The new Network was officially initiated, and the objectives of the two-year programme were set out.

Objectives that were agreed for Phase 2 (in brief form)

Project objectives, as agreed in the Letter of Offer, were grouped into five workstreams:

1. Governance and Communication (agreed activities outlined in **Appendix 1**)
2. Leadership and Upskilling (agreed activities outlined in **Appendix 2**)
3. Knowledge Transfer/Skills for Innovation (agreed activities outlined in **Appendix 3**)
4. Curriculum Alignment (agreed activities outlined in **Appendix 4**)
5. Career Attractiveness (agreed activities outlined in **Appendix 5**)

Timeline for the Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills (HTS) Collaborative Network Project

The project was initiated on 1 March 2017 and was completed on 28 June 2019.

Participants that were engaged

Over the 30 months of the Network project, membership expanded from an initial number of 10 to a total of 78 companies from across Northern Ireland.

There was collaboration across the six counties of Northern Ireland, ie Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone, and amongst a range of stakeholders including:

- HTS Food and Drink Collaborative Network
- Food manufacturers/employment providers from the Food and Drink industry
- Schools (including primary schools, high schools, comprehensive schools, academies), Further and Higher Education Bodies, including universities

- Training providers
- Careers teachers
- Recruitment companies
- Academics
- Regional local council authorities

Please see **Appendix 6** for a full list of HTS Network membership.

Outcomes from Phase 2 project

Following the successful application for the Invest NI Collaborative network 2nd phase grant, the HTS Collaborative Network:

- Provided opportunities to attract talent into the food and drink sector, developed a people pipeline across all levels and abilities to ensure the sector's long-term viability
- Challenged the many misconceptions about the sector, such as low pay and poor conditions, and promoted instead the array of career options and career development opportunities and competitive salaries that exist within the industry
- Promoted sector attractiveness to prospective candidates with different skills and aptitudes, including those with business acumen and leadership potential
- Collaborated with the industry to champion investment in training for existing employees in the sector
- Engaged with appropriate educational providers and stakeholders across Northern Ireland

Listed below are headline outcomes for each workstream:

Governance and Communication (headline outcomes)

Governance:

- **Produced HTS Network Terms of Reference**, signed off by Steering Committee
- **Produced an HTS Network Charter**, signed up to by Network members
- **Collated quarterly reports**, recording activity

Created an HTS Collaborative Network “brand”/identity:

- **Sector specific logo created**



- **Sector specific webpage created** for job seekers, employers and students, providing information, and shared with approximately 412 Network contacts
- **Twitter account created**, (89 followers)

Grew membership:

- **Network Stakeholder/Member database created** and maintained. **78 members** and **approximately 412 Network contacts**.
- **Grew membership from 10 members, initially, to a total of 78 Network members**

Engaged with Stakeholders:

Over the lifetime of the project, the Network **built working relationships with:**

- **Regional/local councils** – HTS engaged directly with all economic departments within local councils by email/phone and face-to-face meetings, setting out the Network objectives and providing a contact to engage with for any local skills activities. The Network represented the Food and Drink sector on three Skills Forums run by local councils: Mid Ulster, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon and Derry and Strabane.
- **Education providers** – careers service, schools and colleges. Regional colleges gave presentations at four HTS workshops and 2 HR Forums. Twelve individual meetings were arranged with business support managers in regional colleges. Four presentations were given to regional career service offices. Network represented the Food and Drink sector at eight school careers fairs.
- **Human resources (HR) representatives (approximately 61) of Food and Drink manufacturing companies in Northern Ireland**. HR representatives attended all HTS workshops and HR Forums. Twenty-nine attended the Futures in Food event in Loughry; 28 HR representatives were involved in meetings with government departments; 58 participated in the PR of HR Forum; 12 at Inspire and Well-being Forum

Communicated core messages:

- **HTS information booklet produced and shared with approximately 412 Network contacts**, providing information on training available within the local education system, upskilling and apprenticeship opportunities, Further and Higher Education courses etc, training contacts, info graphics, synopsis of options etc
- **Training opportunities and core messages** within the food and manufacturing industry and processing sector **promoted at 5 workshops, 3 HR Forums and several joint, collaborative initiatives/events**
- **Benefits of further education and upskilling promoted** across the sector **at 5 workshops, 3 HR Forums and several joint, collaborative initiatives/events**

- **12 stories featured in local/national press** across a range of different publications, equating to **39 individual press items** in total, **generating publicity for the activity of the Network**

Press coverage stats:

Number of press items: 39

Total circulation: 677,113

Total opportunities to see: 1,692,782.5

Examples of PR coverage can be found in **section 12 of the Appendices**.

- **Industry journalists and bloggers informed about career information/opportunities** in the form of press releases, **generating additional publicity**. They were also **invited to attend the 3 HR Forums**

Leadership and Upskilling (headline outcomes)

Created platforms to promote upskilling and retraining

- **Four workshops facilitated, June – October 2017:**
 - 12 June 2017, Armagh
 - 14 June 2017, Belfast
 - 12 September 2017, Belfast
 - 23 October 2017, Dungannon
- Good stakeholder attendance and representation at these events
- Participants received information and guidance on a wide range of topics
- Upskilling and retraining opportunities promoted and encouraged
- Regional Colleges and private training companies attended and provided information about courses of benefit to the Food and Drink industry
- Presentations provided and information disseminated
- Core messages communicated on behalf of the Food and Drink industry
- Employees suitable for up-skilling and retraining identified and potentially “signposted” to relevant courses

Enabled the right connections:

- **Larger food manufacturing companies (Project Stakeholders) were successfully linked to SMEs** to facilitate knowledge transfer and for sharing of best practice
- HTS events were open to all membership of the Network, Project Stakeholders and Network members alike. **Workshops** were designed as **open forums to facilitate discussion, cross-pollination, knowledge transfer, information dissemination of core messages but also between participants** (including **best practice**)
- **Employees suitable for up-skilling identified** and potentially “signposted” to relevant courses

Engaged with appropriate Stakeholders:

Over the lifetime of the project and in order to progress the Leadership and Upskilling workstream, the HTS Network engaged with:

- **61 HR representatives, facilitating 3 HR Forums**
- **Schools, Further and Higher Education Bodies, including universities**
- **Training providers**
- **Careers teachers**
- **Recruitment companies**
- **Academics**
- **Regional local council authorities**

Promoted, encouraged, assisted in delivery of:

- **Placements for industry trainees:** presentations on placements, the process and obligations delivered by Southern Regional College (SRC) at the request of HTS; follow-ups conducted by SRC at a subsequent HR Forum (October 2018) and Future in Food event (May 2019).
- **Training in general:** eg Upskilling and retraining
- **Training, middle managers:**
 - Middle managers were encouraged to undertake export training at an Export Training Workshop organised for the members of the Network in Belfast (21 March 2018) and facilitated by FXL Executive Solutions.
 - Belfast Metropolitan College also delivered training to individual member companies in September 2018 in response to expressions of interest. Topics included sales and marketing, export marketing, sales etc
- **“Skills Support”:** raised awareness of government funding for Essential Skills
- **30 engineering apprenticeships piloted in the food and drink industry**

- **Apprenticeships:** the HTS Network worked with Southern Regional College (SRC) to promote **Food Apprenticeships** across the Network. Apprenticeships were **promoted at two of the HTS workshops and one of the HTS Forums**. The Network developed **info graphics** setting out **pathways to apprenticeships**.

Provided training:

- To career staff on opportunities for career progression with the Food and Drink industry

Conducted research into:

- **Possibility of organising an Owner-Manager training programme:** entered into discussions with Belfast Metropolitan College (proposal was not deemed viable due to an insufficient number of applicants expressing interest in enrolling at the time)
- **How to increase the uptake of apprenticeships across the Network:** seeking to encourage greater industry-led skills provision across the region and to meet the immediate needs of employers in the sector

Knowledge Transfer/Skills for Innovation (headline outcomes)

Created platforms to facilitate knowledge transfer/skills for innovation:

- Organised **three HR Forums** to facilitate greater knowledge transfer and address export development skills gap outlined in Scoping Study:
 - **PR of HR:** an HR Forum designed to explore new ways of engaging with potential employees through online media (78 attendees)

“Thank you for inviting us to the seminar today it was informative and a good insight into the needs and of our local employers as well as the labour market.” [Feedback on PR of HR from a public sector representative]

“I wanted to extend my thanks to you for such a well run and important event.” [Feedback on PR of HR from an education sector representative]

“The event, speakers and content was fantastic; I came away totally energised and full of fresh ideas.” [Feedback on PR of HR from a private sector representative]

- **Inspire Wellbeing:** an HR Forum exploring ways to retain staff and reduce turnover and absenteeism (16 attendees)

Excellent workshop today, well done...lots to think about. As always if you need any further support do give me a shout, happy to help. [Feedback on Inspire Wellbeing from a private sector representative]

"Many thanks for the opportunity to attend a great event today." [Feedback on Inspire Wellbeing from a private sector representative]

- **Futures in Food:** an HR Forum designed to provide direct links between employers and school career teachers and Government careers advisors (29 attendees)

"Just a quick email to say well done on a great event yesterday. I genuinely believe that many of the teachers attending found it beneficial and I know we got a lot of positive feedback at the stand." [Feedback on Futures in Food from a private sector representative]

"A really useful afternoon spent engaging with careers teachers from across the country about career and development opportunities at Dunbia. Events like this are a fantastic way of getting word out to people about this fantastic business and industry, and showing them the range of roles involved in getting food from farm to fork!" [Feedback on Futures in Food from a private sector representative]

- Organised **five Network workshops to facilitate greater knowledge transfer** and address export development skills gap outlined in Scoping Study. One workshop offered training on export development, for example.

Engaged with appropriate Stakeholders:

- Schools and regional colleges
- Careers advisors
- Government agencies
- Private recruitment companies
- Recruitment service providers
- HTS Network members/Stakeholders
- Training providers (private and public)

Encouraged greater industry-led skills provision across the region:

- By applying the findings from the original Scoping Study and research carried out by HTS to identify ways of addressing export development skills gaps eg providing an HTS workshop on export development
- Provided training on a range of topics including export strategy, HR research, planning and implementation, upskilling support and apprenticeships

Explored opportunities to develop a Knowledge Transfer Network, working with Higher Education providers:

- Invited all seven Regional colleges to attend and present at all HTS workshops and HR forums. A beneficial Knowledge Transfer Network was established between the Regional Colleges and the HTS Network as a result of these collaborations
- Worked with Southern Regional College, Northern Regional College and Belfast Metropolitan College on the sub-projects of Bridge to Employment and Academy models

Developed a skills pipeline process and network:

- Future in Food event designed to begin a process of direct connection between industry and the local schools/colleges, providing direct links between employers, school career teachers and Government careers advisors
- Engaged with Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association (NISCA) and College of Agriculture, Food & Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) to provide insight on diverse range of career paths with companies, opportunities for school-leavers

Curriculum Alignment (headline outcomes)

Created awareness of skills requirements and opportunities within the Agri-Food sector to education and careers advisory:

- Skills requirements and opportunities within the sector promoted at HTS workshops and HR Forums
- Related core messages communicated in presentations to education and careers advisory
- Training on skills requirements and career opportunities in the sector provided to careers teachers
- Information on skills requirements and career opportunities in the sector provided to regional colleges
- Attended careers days, schools' skills fairs and made school visits

Approached the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)

- With a view to ensuring the education sector has in place appropriate course material to meet the future skills needs of industry
- Network capacity and time requirement to complete this activity was insufficient to permit a successful outcome, however.

Career Attractiveness (headline outcomes)

Engaged with schools:

- **Tasty Career presentations** provided in class rooms
- **144 school visits**
- **9 school skills fairs attended**, promotion of the sector to students and parents
- **15 careers days**
- **4114 school children received an in-class presentation**

Developed a pipeline:

- **Future in Food event** - 200 career teachers brought together with 30 Agri-Food companies
- **20 company Career Ambassadors created** to provide career promotion to schools

Conducted research into:

- **The appeal of other sectors.** Three skills fairs attended to bench mark against other sector recruitment activities
- **Commissioned research into Understanding the key drivers in the Career Decision process**, conducted by Food and Drink Sector Skills

Next steps

HTS will:

- Continue to circulate information on recruitment events and activities occurring in Northern Ireland
- Maintain the webpage and twitter to promote the career attractiveness of the Agri-Food sector

- Continue to attend a limited number of school career fairs
- Continue to attend regional council skills task group meetings
- Provide representatives of the sector to any government department initiatives in relation to recruitment, skills and employee well-being
- Begin a process of research into automation and robotics, looking at how this may be introduced into the production of Agri-Food products. HTS and the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association (NIFDA) are investigating Manufacturing 4.0 initiatives and have begun discussions with Invest NI.

Section Two: Background to the Project

The local Agri-Food sector and the challenges it faces

Agri-Food manufacturing in Northern Ireland is now the lead sector within our economy, employing 100,000 people and generating £2 billion in wages. According to [an article that appeared in the Northern Ireland BBC News on 25 July 2019](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-49111827), [https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-49111827], the sales value of the food we produce will hit around £5 billion this year [refers to 2018] with at least £3.5 billion of that coming from export markets.

Whilst these figures and outputs sound encouraging, the Food and Drinks industry is facing on-going challenges in relation to the skills profile of its workforce. [Research and analysis conducted by the Department for the Economy](https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/eu-exit-analysis), [https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/eu-exit-analysis], reveals persistent skills gaps and skills shortages within the labour force which do not appear to be being addressed by historic levels of up-skilling and recruitment, education or training.

The Food and Drink industry in Northern Ireland is a technically challenging and evolving sector but its needs are not being addressed as effectively as they could be due to a lack of comprehensive training provision and attractive profile.

According to Agri-Food Strategy Board's *Going for Growth, A Strategic Action Plan in Support of the Northern Ireland Agri-Food Industry* publication, published in April 2013, the recruitment and development of a highly skilled and motivated workforce were identified as crucial goals. The Strategic Action Plan incorporated specific targets reflecting the industry's ambition and aspiration to achieve an increased employment target of an additional 15,000 people or an uplift of 15%.

Recognising the persistence of the shortfall in 2016, a number of Food and Drink businesses came together to form a **Skills and Sector Attractiveness Pilot Group**/ the "Pilot Group" to work collectively with leading organisations associated with the sector to identify and address the gaps that exist between the skills requirements and skills provision; to support the targets identified in the Agri-Food Strategy Board's "Going for Growth" action plan.

The **Pilot Group** decided to conduct a Scoping Study. The six-month Scoping Study was initiated in **July 2015 and was completed in January 2016**.

More details on the findings from the Scoping Study

- Prohibitive training costs and adverse effect on upskilling
- Industry's increase in demand for employees not being met by insufficient number of applicants
- Difficulty recruiting staff with the requisite skills
- Lack of uptake on apprenticeships

- Need for enhanced Management and leadership training
- Need for development of business skills at primary and processing levels (eg cost analysis, commercial viability and application of technical skills)
- Lack of understanding of agriculture and food production and, therefore, lack of awareness of the range of attractive career options within the industry
- Difficulty recruiting graduates into the sector, particularly graduates with scientific and technical skills
- Lack of recruitment marketing skills and failure to appreciate the need to meet or exceed prospective employee expectations throughout the recruitment cycle
- Need to better harness the fresh talent at Further Education Colleges, Universities and the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE), eg by creating and promoting apprenticeship opportunities on farm, in the factory and within skilled occupations such as the bakery sector

Successful application for additional Collaborative Growth funding

The HTS Network Collaboration project led to a successful application for additional Collaborative Growth funding to support a Scoping Study into Automation and Robotics within the Agri-Food manufacturing process. Evidence gained while working on the HTS programme highlighted the need to explore how the ongoing issues of recruitment could be addressed by introducing automation within the production process. HTS and the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association (NIFDA) are keen to begin a process of research into automation and robotics, looking at how this may be introduced into the production of Agri-Food products. HTS and NIFDA are investigating Manufacturing 4.0 initiatives and have begun discussions with Invest NI.

Role of NIFDA as Lead Company for both phases of the project

The Lead Partner in both the Scoping Study and the main HTS project was the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association (NIFDA). NIFDA is an independent, non-party political organisation funded by its members from the Food and Drink industry. NIFDA represents 100 businesses across Northern Ireland (80% of the sector turnover) with the membership jointly supporting approximately one third of the Northern Ireland private sector workforce.

NIFDA's Vision:

NIFDA's vision is a strong and united membership working together towards a sustainable and growing internationally competitive food and drink industry in Northern Ireland.

NIFDA's Mission:

1. To be the “Voice” of our members that is respected and listened to by government and other key stakeholders
2. To collectively develop with our members pan-industry strategies that support our members' endeavours
3. To facilitate members business network development, including member to member support and development networks
4. To be a source of information that is valued by members

In acting as Lead Partner for this network, NIFDA sought to:

- Support the Agri-Food industry within a framework of strategic actions to increase the attractiveness of the sector
- Develop strategic plans to focus on reducing the skills gap and provide support for, and understanding of, employee up-skilling
- Develop a programme of measures to ensure higher levels of engagement in recruitment markets and provide a higher qualified and skilled workforce, the foundation for sales growth in local and international markets

Section Three: Network Objectives

Network Objectives

The Scoping Study report was analysed and discussed by **the Pilot Group** in July 2016. The findings provided confirmation of the key issues being experienced across the sector and the following core objectives were agreed upon:

- To establish a collaborative network across the Agri-Food sector
- To promote and facilitate increased collaboration across the industry to address common problems and set common goals
- To identify and engage with appropriate stakeholders including local councils, further/higher education providers, recruitment companies, careers advisory service, careers teachers etc
- To strategically address skills gaps and issues within the sector as evidenced by the findings of the Scoping Study
- To apply for an Invest NI Collaborative Network 2nd phase grant to take forward and enable further action

How the Network Objectives were agreed upon

The Pilot Group set objectives which were discussed with Invest NI. An application for an Invest NI Collaborative Network 2nd phase grant was made.

The application for an Invest NI Collaborative Network 2nd phase grant was successful, and a letter of offer was received in February 2017, setting out a total of 30 smart objectives across the five workstreams. The smart objectives were based on discussions between the Pilot Group and Invest NI during the application phase.

HTS Network SMART objectives outlined in **Appendix 7**

Network Project Plan

The letter of offer also set out the overall project plan.

The overall HTS Network project plan is outlined in **Appendix 8**.

Section Four: Network Membership and Governance

Workstream Leads

Initially recruitment of the HTS Network members was drawn from Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association (NIFDA) membership. As previously discussed, a Steering Committee was established on 24 April 2017 and was comprised of members of the NIFDA Board.

The following Workstream Leads were appointed:

- Leadership and Up-skilling Moy Park
- Communication Dale Farm
- Knowledge Transfer Mash Direct
- Curriculum Alignment Thompsons
- Career Attractiveness Linden Foods

SMEs and Stakeholders engagement

A drive to target and recruit SMEs was initiated via email promotion and contact by email or by phone call. Local SMEs were also strategically invited to attend a series of Network workshops that were organised across Northern Ireland.

During the initial phase of the Network project, the Network Facilitator was tasked with engaging with an agreed list of stakeholders. Stakeholders were contacted by email or by phone call in the following areas:

All local councils

- Further education providers
- Higher education providers
- Recruitment companies
- The careers advisory service
- Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association (NISCA) career teachers

How Terms of Reference were agreed

The Letter of Offer included Terms of Reference (TOR) which defined the purpose and structures of the project, setting out the rules and obligations of the Network members, any committees, and covering aspects such as meeting structures and interactions with members who agreed to join the network.

At a subsequent meeting of the Pilot Group, Pilot Group members decided that the HTS Collaborative Network would oversee the running of the project and that a consultant should be appointed to act as a Facilitation Manager, to facilitate day-to-day operations and engagement with network members.

Terms of Reference outlined in **Appendix 9**.

The HTS Network Charter

The HTS Network Charter is outlined in **Appendix 10**.

How the Network worked in practice, ie meetings with the Steering Board, Councils and one-to-ones with individual companies

The Facilitation Manager was responsible for the progression and delivery of programme objectives on behalf of the HTS Collaborative Network.

The Facilitation Manager was supported by the HTS Steering Board. The Steering Board reviewed progress against goals and planned and prioritised future strategies, providing guidance on each activity.

Both the Network membership and the HTS Steering Board met every quarter to review and plan the next phase of activities. Engagement outside of these meetings was by direct email or phone call. The Facilitator co-ordinated directly with the Workstream Leader for the workstream relevant to the particular activity.

Reports stemming from the quarterly Steering Board meetings were circulated to Network members.

The Steering Board reported to the NIFDA Board and the Ministerial Future Skills Action Group.

The programme made quarterly reports to Invest NI, highlighting progress against objectives and identifying any major issues impinging on progress.

The plan was updated on a quarterly basis reflecting the dynamic and changing needs of the industry.

There was planned and regular engagement with local councils on activities of mutual benefit: eg skill task forces were being established across four local councils at the time: Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon; Mid Ulster; Derry and Strabane and Mid and East Antrim. As a result of this collaborative engagement, the HTS Network was invited to represent the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Manufacturers on the council Skills Forums.

During the course of the project time-line, the HTS Collaborative Network had approximately 49 one-to-one meetings with many individual companies and Network contributors. Levels of engagement varied depending on the focus of the Network within any particular quarter.

HTS Network Communication Plan

Communication was one of the key objectives of the Network project. A Communication Plan was created that would target three main areas:

- Communication across the Network
- Communication and promotion of opportunities across the sector
- Communication and engagement with Government and other stakeholders

A copy of the HTS Network Communication Plan can be found in **section 11 of the Appendices**.

PR coverage achieved

During the timeline of the project, the HTS Network was successful in getting 12 stories published in the local and/or national press. Due to the fact that each story was typically printed in a few publications rather than a single one, this represents a total of 39 published news items. This served to publicise and highlight the activity of the Network project and raised the profile of the collaborative initiatives being undertaken to tackle the issues.

Examples of PR coverage can be found in **section 12 of the Appendices**.

Press coverage stats:

Number of press items: 39

Total circulation: 677,113

Total opportunities to see: 1,692,782.5

Section Five: Workstreams:

Five.1: Communication [Workstream Lead, Dale Farm]

Summary of objectives for this workstream

1. Hard copy TOR and management structures to be created and signed off by Steering Committee
2. Quarterly activities will be assessed and recorded into quarterly reports, circulated and accompanied with the claims
3. Create a Network Charter which will set out the objectives of the project – signed by all at the beginning
4. Strategy paper on self-sustaining programme investigated and presented to the Steering Committee by early 2018
5. Develop/maintain and implement a stakeholder database
6. Grow membership and maintain formal engagement with local councils and education providers
7. Develop, maintain and implement a Communications Strategy across Network partners
8. Develop an online portal for job seekers, employers and students to access information
9. Attend all FSAG (or revised version of) meetings to advise and take soundings from
10. Design and print a booklet/leaflet highlighting the project goals, objectives and activities
11. Identify, collate and disseminate information on current training available for the food manufacturing and processing sector

Activities undertaken to address these objectives

The HTS Network created a stakeholder database and a Sector specific logo. Recognising the new way potential employees research and find jobs, it sought to improve employment opportunities within the sector by creating a web page and using the social network Twitter (creating a Twitter account). It developed an online and social media presence to enable access to the professional community and increase networking reach and opportunity.

Membership grew from an initial figure of 10 to a total of 78 companies by the end of the project. Growth was achieved by inviting new companies to become involved each time a separate workshop, HR Forum or Regional Council event took place. Companies would be informed of the upcoming event by email or directly by phone and invited to attend. This outreach would have been undertaken by the Project Facilitator or other Network members.

During the lifetime of the project the Network organised 5 workshops, 3 HR Forums and several joint initiatives. These collaborative events were used as platforms to disseminate information on available training programmes for the food and manufacturing sector; to provide training on export strategy, research, business planning and implementation; and to also offer up-skilling and apprenticeship support.

To inform and link the regional education bodies and industry, a booklet was created with information on training available within the local education system. It included information about up-skilling and apprenticeships and also covered Further and Higher Education, Undergraduate, Postgraduate and Open University courses. Please see **Appendix 13** to see a copy of the HTS Information Booklet.

The benefits of further education and upskilling and synopsis of Further Education options available were communicated and promoted across the Network via email.

Activities of the Network were advertised in the local and national press: 12 stories were released across a range of different publications, equating to approximately 40 individual press items in total.

Outcomes achieved

- 1. Hard copy TOR and management structures created and signed off by Steering Committee**
- 2. Quarterly activities assessed and recorded into quarterly reports**
- 3. Network Charter, setting out objectives of the project, created and signed by all**
- 4. Strategy paper on self-sustaining programme presented to Steering Committee in September 2017**
- 5. Developed/maintained/implemented stakeholder database**
- 6. Grew membership from 10 members to 78 members and maintained formal engagement with local councils and education providers**
- 7. Developed/maintained and implemented a Communications Strategy across Network partners**

8. **Created a Sector specific logo**
9. **Developed a Sector specific web page for job seekers, employers and students to access information**
10. **Created a Sector specific twitter account**
11. **Attended FSAG (or revised version of) meetings – provided advice and took soundings from**
12. **Designed and printed an HTS branded booklet, highlighting project goals, objectives and activities. Please refer to Appendix 13 to see a copy of the HTS Information Booklet** [1000 copies were printed. Approximately 160 were posted; approximately 412 copies were shared with Network contacts as a pdf; approximately 150/200 copies were distributed at HR Forums and workshops]
13. **Identified, collated and disseminated information on current training available for the food and manufacturing processing sector**
14. **12 stories featured in the local/national press across a range of different publications, equating to approximately 40 individual press items in total**

Press coverage stats:

Number of press items: 39

Total circulation: 677,113

Total opportunities to see: 1,692,782.5

For examples of press coverage, please refer to **Appendix 12**.

Section Five: Workstreams:

Five.2: Leadership and Upskilling [Workstream Lead, Moy Park]

Summary of objectives for this workstream

1. Facilitate four workshops designed in the identification of employees suitable for upskilling
2. Link larger companies with SMEs to enable knowledge transfer and dissemination of best practice
3. Engage with 25 sector HR Representatives (five per region) to develop a process
4. To assist in delivery of placements for industry trainees and training to career staff on Agri-Food
5. Encourage 20 middle managers to complete training in the following areas: lean manufacturing; sales and marketing; category management; professional selling; export marketing
6. Investigate and research the possibility of running an Owner-Manager training programme
7. Raise awareness of government funding for Essential Skills – this will be included in a “Skills Support”
8. Using the Apprenticeship in Engineering at Levels 2 and 3, develop a pilot for the food and drinks industry
9. Using the network, promote and encourage Pilot 30 engineering apprenticeships in food and drinks industry

Activities undertaken to address these objectives

Workshops on developing employee pipeline

Workshops were organised to provide an open forum where all the issues faced by the sector, such as attracting labour, labour issues, high levels of migrant employee dependency, employment difficulties etc, could be openly discussed by the companies. One of the key outcomes was developing an employee pipeline and engaging with potential employees. This action culminated in the HTS “Futures in Food” event in May 2019, which established closer working links within the sector between career teachers, career advisors and the industry. In addition to this, over the course of the project regular presentations were provided to the careers teachers’ NISCA bi-annual conference.

Bridge to Employment programme

Three HTS member companies were involved in a Bridge to Employment programme. The main objective was to provide customised training to prepare unemployed, and the long-term unemployed people, with the skills necessary to for new employment within the food manufacturing sector.

Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills provided **training and mentoring for the network companies** to begin developing new routes to export markets in the international markets. FXL Ireland were chosen to provide the export training in a central Belfast hotel in March 2018.

As part of the Network workshop series, the participating companies received **one to one training with a specialist mentor**, who provided a wide range of training and business development support including marketing skills and logistic knowledge.

To **promote an awareness of government funding for Essential Skills**, a presentation was given to the network by Invest NI David McKeown Skills division at the HR forum in "Inspire and Retain" This was in addition to ongoing promotion across the network companies via email and workshops.

HTS **conducted** several **surveys** to inform the activities of the network providing leadership on the current issues impacting on employment within the sector.

Include details of the outcomes that were achieved

1. Facilitated four workshops designed in the identification of employees suitable for up-skilling

These workshops were held in the early stage of the project. A wide range of topics was discussed, including the identification of employees suitable for up-skilling. Representatives of both the Regional Colleges and private training providers took part in these discussions, which also included presentations from the training providers.

12 June 2017, Armagh

14 June 2017, Belfast

12 September 2017, Belfast

23 October 2017, Dungannon

2. Linked larger companies with SMEs to enable knowledge transfer and dissemination of best practice

Attendance at all HTS events was open to all the membership of the project. This included large food manufacturing companies who had been registered as Project Stakeholders. The format of these workshops was based on open discussions between all the participants. Information and ideas were shared with attendees.

3. Engaged with 61 sector HR Representatives (five per region) to develop a process

Over the lifetime of the project, HTS recruited 78 Network members. Recruitment began with the 100+ membership of NIFDA, progressing to target companies across each council region as the project activities were rolled out. The Network engaged with a total of 61 HR departments. There was productive, collaborative interaction with HR departments in preparation for, during and after HTS HR Forums, HTS Workshops, Bridge to Employment and Futures in Food events and generally

throughout the Network project. Engagement with HR departments within the sector was viewed as key to the success of the initiatives/events.

4. Assisted in delivery of placements for industry trainees and training to career staff on Agri-Food

At the initial workshop stage, presentations on placements, the process and obligations were delivered by Southern Regional College (SRC) at the request of HTS. This was followed up by SRC at the HR Forum in October 2018 and Future in Food event in May 2019. The workshops/presentations were attended by company HR personnel, Regional College business development managers (business training), career teacher representatives, Regional Government representatives (Economic Development), private recruitment companies, private business training companies and Invest NI representatives.

5. Encouraged 20 managers to complete training in the following areas: lean manufacturing; sales and marketing; category management; professional selling; export marketing

An Export Training Workshop was organised for the members of the Network in Belfast on 21 March 2018. The workshop was facilitated by FXL Executive Solutions.

In addition, Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC) delivered presentations to individual members in September 2018. This took the form of BMC conducting one-to-one discussions with companies who had expressed interest in receiving this.

BMC proposed the idea of creating a Financial Academy to provide businesses with training on cash flow and invoice input in response to an enquiry about the potential for this from a Network member company. HTS evaluated the BMC proposal and felt it had merit. Unfortunately, this was not carried forward, however, as the proposal did not receive requisite backing to proceed from the department.

6. Investigated and researched the possibility of running an Owner-Manager training programme

In November 2018 discussions were held with Nuala Kilmartin of Belfast Metropolitan College to investigate the costs and timeframe required to organise Owner Manager training. HTS was advised that a budget was required to move forward and any course would have to be agreed and funded by the department. In order for this initiative to be agreed/funded, there would need to be a sufficient number of applicants interested in enrolling. Unfortunately, due to work commitments of Owner Managers, there was insufficient interest shown in this activity.

Flexibility on how the training was provided could have gone some way to addressing issues surrounding Owner Managers' work commitments and constraints. If the training could be provided on a one-to-one basis within the working environment, a higher level of uptake may be achievable.

7. Raised awareness of government funding for Essential Skills – included in a “Skills Support”

8. Using the Apprenticeship in Engineering at Levels 2 and 3, developed a pilot for the food and drinks industry

9. Using the network, promoted and encouraged Pilot 30 engineering apprenticeships in food and drinks industry

Apprenticeships

Research was conducted by HTS, looking at increasing the uptake of apprenticeships across the Network and seeking to encourage greater industry-led skills provision across the region and meeting immediate needs of employers in this key sector.

HTS worked with Southern Regional College to promote Food Apprenticeship across the Network. The college provided information and promoted apprenticeships at two of the HTS workshops and one of the Forums. They also supplied info graphics setting out pathways to apprenticeships. A revised version of this was included in the HTS contact booklet.

Section Five: Workstreams:

Five. 3: Knowledge Transfer [Workstream Lead, Mash Direct]

Summary of objectives for this workstream

1. To address specific export development skills gaps highlighted in the original Scoping Study
2. To explore opportunities to develop a Knowledge Transfer Network, working with Higher Education providers
3. Develop a skills pipeline process and network. Using the network for referral, engagement and assessment

Activities undertaken to address these objectives

Apprenticeships

Seeking to encourage greater industry-led skills provision across the region and to meet the immediate needs of employers in this key sector, research was carried out by HTS to look at increasing the uptake of apprenticeships across the Network.

HTS worked with Southern Regional College to promote Food Apprenticeships across the network. The College provided information and promoted apprenticeships at two of the HTS workshops and one of the Forums. They also supplied info graphics setting out the pathways to apprenticeships. A revised version of this was included in the HTS contact booklet.

HR Forums

A series of HR Forums were organised to facilitate **greater knowledge transfer** and a more structured collaboration to better achieve the common goals. The topics and subject matter of the forums were designed to increase knowledge and inform the Network of potential solutions.

1. PR of HR - Learning of the new ways to engage with potential employees through online media

Engagement with potential employees has evolved over recent years. With the emergence of smart phones, how we communicate has changed beyond recognition. Gone are the days when a company can place an advertisement and sit back and expect the best of the available recruits to apply. The PR of HR Forum (October 2019) set out to educate the employers on how to communicate with potential employees in the modern marketplace, advocating a process of promotion of the workplace, engagement with the public, creating interest and then advertising a career opportunity.

2. Inspire wellbeing - Exploring ways to retain staff and reduce turnover and absenteeism

It's a lot more cost-effective to retain your employees than to recruit new ones.

To address the problem, HTS offered the industry's HR directors and senior business leaders the opportunity to participate in a seminar which challenged their perceptions and highlight ways to inspire, retain and unlock the talent within their organisations. HTS teamed up with Talent Sensus and Talent WB Group to host an HR Forum on Thursday 9 May 2019.

The event was open to all local food and drink businesses and was aimed at HR and senior management.

3. Futures in Food – providing direct links between employers and school career teachers and Government careers advisors

This event was held on Wednesday 29 May 2019 at the College of Agriculture, Food & Rural Enterprise (CAFRE), Loughry Campus, Cookstown. The collaborative event was in response to the high demand to attract more school-leavers into food-related careers and close the existing, ever-widening “skills gap”. Over 30 Agri-Food and Drink companies from a range of food sectors across Northern Ireland attended the Forum.

Working in partnership with Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association (NISCA) and CAFRE, HTS provided insight into a diverse range of career paths with companies offering opportunities for school-leavers. Information on Agri-Food related courses, apprenticeships and syllabus support available to schools was also provided throughout the afternoon.

Outcomes that were achieved

1. Addressed specific export development skills gaps highlighted in the original Scoping Study

The gap in specific export development skills was highlighted in the original Scoping Study. The HTS Network arranged for specific export development skills training to be provided by FXL. This took the form of a one-day specific workshop which was open for all Network members to attend.

2. Explored opportunities to develop a Knowledge Transfer Network, working with Higher Education providers

During the project, regional colleges were invited to attend and present at all the workshops and HR forums. In addition, individual one-to-one meetings were arranged across all 7 regional colleges. Southern Regional College, Northern Regional College and Belfast Metropolitan College continued to work with the Network on sub-projects, Bridge to Employment and Academy models.

3. Developed a skills pipeline process and network. Used the network for referral, engagement and assessment

The primary aim of the Future in Food event was to begin a process of direct connection (“pipeline”) between industry and the local college or school in their area. This outreach was encouraged and sharing contacts for future follow-up cross-pollination was promoted. The Future in Food event happened as a result of HTS attending and presenting at the NISCA conference on four previous occasions.

Section Five: Workstreams:

Five.4: Curriculum Alignment [Workstream Lead, Thompsons]

Summary of objectives for this workstream

1. To create awareness and understanding, across the education and careers advisory sector, of the skills requirements and opportunities within the Agri-Food sector
2. Working with the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to ensure the education sector has in place appropriate course material to meet the future skills needs of industry

Activities undertaken to address these objectives/objectives achieved

1. The **HTS Network provided presentations to career teachers at NISCA conferences in November 2017, May 2018, November 2018** and promoted the Agri-Food sector as a career choice, highlighting the skills gap within the sector
2. In **May 2019 200 career teachers attended the HTS Futures in Food event**. Thirty companies provided presentations to **increase the career advisory sector's awareness and understanding about the opportunities in the Food and Drink industry, skills requirement etc**
3. **HTS also attended school interview days and career fairs to promote the sector to sixth form students**
4. The second objective, of working with the CCEA to ensure the education sector has in place appropriate course material to meet the future skills needs of industry, proved to be a challenging one. The time required, and the range of people involved in this area made it difficult to move things forward. Due to the time requirement and the level of expertise required to compile suitable material for inclusion into the curriculum, it was agreed that these actions were unobtainable within the network timescale. Resources were then redirected to facilitate employer surveys and direct engagement with the Department for Economy (Bridge to Employment) and the Skills Pavilion at Balmoral
5. **Other possible approaches toward the achievement of objective 2** would be for companies to adopt greater outreach towards the schools in their locality, fostering closer links between industry and schools; companies could also be encouraged to organise factory open days as part of a process of "opening the industry up" and encouraging younger pupils to think about the Agri-Food sector as a possible career option from an earlier age; regular (annual) transfer of knowledge on jobs and career options between industry and career teachers would also be beneficial.

Include details of the outcomes that were achieved

1. **Created awareness and understanding, across the education and careers advisory sector, of the skills requirements and opportunities within the Agri-Food sector**
2. Worked with the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to ensure the education sector has in place appropriate course material to meet the future skills needs of industry (objective not completed)

Section Five: Workstreams:

Five.5: Career Attractiveness [Workstream Lead, Linden Foods]

Summary of objectives for this workstream

1. Target 20 School Career visits per year – provide feedback and submissions to DAERA education review
2. Research and understand the key drivers in the career decision process
3. Disseminate online information to recruitment companies and adult training providers and career-changers
4. Methodology: investigate/attend international recruitment fairs. Conduct research with recruitment firms
5. Identify the appeal of employment in other sectors
6. Attend recruitment fairs to evaluate the strength or weakness of the Northern Ireland Agri-Food Market place
7. Investigate how the principles and processes embodied in other models such as “Bring It On” (ICT Sector) could be applied to post primary engagement within the Food and Drink Sector
8. 15 Ambassadors to be identified and recruited during the lifetime of the project
9. All Ambassadors to receive training on Presentation Skills provided by NIFDA

Activities undertaken to address these objectives

School visits (144)

Research - Researching and understanding the key drivers in the career decision process

A key activity of the project was to facilitate school visits and to promote the career attractiveness of the sector across the education system. This required providing presentations to pupils in class. The content of these presentations was based on the “Tasty Career” website (<https://tastycareers.org.uk>). These school visits were carried out on behalf of HTS by Geoff Lamb of Food and Drink Sector Skills. In addition to this the HTS Facilitator attended 9 school career events during the course of the project. The main objective was to dispel the myths around a career in the food and drink industry and to promote the benefits of the sector as a career choice.

Food and Drink Sector Skills (FDSS) was recruited to lead this aspect of the project by adopting the “Tasty Careers” process and using it as the basis of the school engagement activity.

Target 20 School Career Visits per year

Within the time of the HTS project, September 2017 to June 2019, FDSS gave 144 presentations to 4114 school children. These were post primary children, year 10 – year 14.

Researching and understanding the key drivers in the career decision process

This involved a major piece of research into careers decision making which culminated in the publication of a report into the issue. The research covered local and international activities and a review of the most relevant career decision making models and their recommendations.

FDSS also conducted research on the formation of structured links between schools and employers in the local Agri-Food sector.

Copies of both research papers can be found in **Appendices 14 and 15**:

Appendix 14 Researching and understanding the key drivers in the career decision process

Appendix 15 Understanding the key drivers in the career decision process

15 Ambassadors to be identified and recruited during the lifetime of the project

This work involved meeting with employers to explain programme details and the need for suitable ambassadors from the industry who are best placed to deliver a positive message about careers in the sector.

Over the period of the programme we overachieved on target numbers of ambassadors, with a total of 20. All ambassadors received training on presentational skills provided through FDSS. The training took place onsite and was based in either small groups or on a one-to-one basis.

HTS Balmoral Skill Pavilion

During Autumn 2017 it was agreed by the Network to explore the possibility of running a Skills Pavilion at the Balmoral show to look at the issue of sector attractiveness and career promotion. The idea was proposed by HTS in response to a survey which had been carried out in October 2017: as part of its process of assessment, HTS conducted a survey of network members to evaluate the pressure on recruitment within the sector in October 2017. The survey highlighted that attracting general applicants was a difficulty for 56% of respondents. In response, the Network moved to increase efforts in the area of career attractiveness and outreach.

Examples of issues highlighted in the survey:

- Acute issue of general employment
- Dependency on migrant labour

- The need to engage with the local population
- Sector attractiveness

The Network agreed that holding a Skills Pavilion at the Balmoral Show might be a beneficial and timely outreach opportunity.

The Balmoral Show was to take place on 16 – 19 May 2018. It was anticipated that the reported annual attendance of over 100,000 people during the four days would provide a great opportunity to promote the sector as a career choice but also engage directly with the general public in a more relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

Futures in Food – Pipeline development

On 29 May 2019 the HTS team ran the first ever ‘Futures in Food’ Forum which was held at the College of Agriculture, Food & Rural Enterprise (CAFRE), Loughry Campus, Cookstown.

This collaborative event was organised in response to the Agri-Food and Drink industry’s urgent need to attract more school-leavers into food-related careers and close the existing ever-widening ‘skills gap’. Twenty-nine Agri-Food and Drink companies from range of food sectors across Northern Ireland attended the forum with the sole aim of building a pipeline of employees from the local higher education schools. Promoting the fact that Agri-Food is ranked in the top three STEM industries for future careers and opportunities in Northern Ireland, the purpose of the afternoon was to give Careers Education, Information and Guidance (CEIAG) teachers and key-influencers a valuable insight into Northern Ireland’s Agri-Food and Drink sector.

HTS, working in partnership with NISCA, both CAFRE and NIFDA, created an opportunity for careers teachers and career advisors to connect directly with the sector. The event was in two stages: stage one, the employers provided presentations to groups of attendees on career pathways within their respective companies; stage two, employers engaged on a one-to-one basis in a traditional skills fair format.

The key purpose was to facilitate ‘face-to-face’ conversations between teachers and Agri-Food industry representatives, and to give teachers an insight into sector specific career progression opportunities along with academic and apprenticeship options available for school-leavers.

Outcomes achieved

- 1. Targeted 20 School Career visits per year – provide feedback and submissions to DAERA education review**
- 2. A written submission was completed and regional group meetings were attended to discuss the topic**
- 3. Research paper on “Understanding the Key Drivers in the Career Decision Process” provided**
- 4. Researched and understand the key drivers in the career decision process**
This information was issued via email and was also included in HTS Contact booklet.

5. Disseminated online information to recruitment companies and adult training providers and career-changers

6. Methodology: investigated/attended international recruitment fairs. Conduct research with recruitment firms

HTS attended Skills London at the Excel Centre London on 24 November 2017. This two-day event provided visitors with the opportunity to discover careers through interactive, inspirational activities and demonstrations, helping young people visually bridge the gap between what they enjoy doing and what they could potentially do as a career. For a report of the Skills London event, please refer to **Appendix 16**.

7. Identified the appeal of employment in other sectors

This action was completed via desk research and by attendance at recruitment fairs. In addition to this, one-to-one meetings were organised with recruitment agencies, servicing large companies. This research and feedback were shared with Network members during the HR Forums, both by the Facilitator and directly by representatives of the recruitment agencies and other business leaders who had been invited to take part.

8. Attended recruitment fairs to evaluate the strength or weakness of the Northern Ireland Agri-Food Market place

Attended the Skills London event in November 2017 and also the Skills NI events held in Titanic, Belfast, in November 2017 and November 2018.

9. Investigated how the principles and processes embodied in other models such as “Bring It On” (ICT Sector) could be applied to post primary engagement within the Food and Drink Sector

This research was conducted by Food and Drink Sector Skills (FDSS) and fed back to the Network. The evidence was used to inform and guide the activities of the Network in the final year of the project, primarily in the increased focus on engagement with the regional colleges.

10. 20 Ambassadors identified and recruited during the lifetime of the project

11. All Ambassadors received training on Presentation Skills provided by FDSS on behalf of NIFDA

Section Six: Lessons Learnt/Unexpected Outcomes

Reflections on overall experience of the project, lessons learnt, unexpected outcomes

The industry recognises that co-ordination is key to success. Promoting the sector and providing outreach works significantly better if businesses work together. Individual companies acting on their own do not have the impact or the capacity to progress into so many different areas. Pooling resources and co-ordinating efforts via a Network like HTS bring enormous benefits to the sector as a whole.

Access to support needs to be improved. Whilst there is support on offer from Government, it was recognised that there has been a low up-take on the part of the companies, largely due to lack of awareness and also because of time constraints. Making applications easier to complete could go some way to increasing the up-take; making it available on mobile devices and/or linking similar applications so that information completed on one application would automatically transfer to another application could also be of benefit to the user going forward.

More effective, clearer communication of support options available is needed. It would be helpful to companies if information about the support available to them could be communicated in a clearer and more user-friendly and accessible way.

Only the larger companies have the capacity to engage effectively. SMEs do not have the personnel to conduct school outreach or hold career days and parent evenings. Skills Forums and schemes to engage with the long-term unemployed can be time-consuming and require ongoing engagement. This can be difficult for smaller companies.

Failure to effectively recruit is reducing output. Companies were reporting that insufficient numbers of employees at the production line level was having a direct impact on their ability to achieve the required production output. Deliveries would be sent out incomplete or behind schedule.

What would you have done differently?

HTS should have allocated more time to certain actions eg Balmoral Show and Curriculum Alignment objective.

Both of these actions would have required more time to roll out successfully and proved too ambitious for a project of this size within a two-year life span.

What worked well?

- An effective mechanism for collaboration was created
- A new employee pipeline between industry HR departments and career teachers was created, facilitating meetings/presentations by industry ambassadors
- Sector engagement with local councils, schools and career bodies
- Visibility of the sector increased outside parameters of normal recruitment channels
- Bridge developed for the economically inactive to return to work in a phased process

- Issue of wellbeing of staff promoted with employers as a result of series of workshops, sharing examples of good practice etc

Feedback from participants/stakeholders etc

Please refer to **Appendix 17** for examples of feedback received from participants/stakeholders in response to and following HTS Network workshops, forums and initiatives.

Feedback to HTS events was extremely positive (more than 95% positive). Here are some examples of feedback received:

“Thank you for inviting us to the seminar today it was informative and a good insight into the needs and of our local employers as well as the labour market.” [Feedback on PR of HR from a public sector representative]

“Excellent workshop today, well done...lots to think about. As always if you need any further support do give me a shout, happy to help.” [Feedback on Inspire Wellbeing Forum from a private sector representative]

“The event, speakers and content was fantastic; I came away totally energised and full of fresh ideas.” [Feedback on PR of HR from a private sector representative]

“A really useful afternoon spent engaging with careers teachers from across the country about career and development opportunities available at Dunbia. Events like this are a fantastic way of getting word out to key people about this fantastic business and industry, and showing them the range of roles involved in getting food from farm to fork!” [Feedback on Futures in Food from a public sector representative]

Section Seven: Summary and Final Recommendations

Current position of the sector

At the time of writing of this report, recruitment issues continue to restrict growth. In some sections of the industry, successful contracts are being won by companies who can guarantee delivery and not by those offering the best price.

The reasons for the recruitment challenges are outside the remit of this report, but the net result is a deficit of skilled employees due to a lack of availability of appropriate courses and insufficient numbers of applicants to fill the available vacancies. Compounding the problem is the shortage of available workers to fill the vacancies at the operative level in Northern Ireland.

All this at a time when the industry is failing to attract sufficient numbers of school leavers: 40% of university funding is derived from student fees. This puts pressure on universities to maximise enrolment. The feedback from HTS members is that progression to university may not be the best option for all pupils. An alternative pathway should be provided within the education system. Third level education is not a pre-requisite of a successful career in the Agri-Food sector. There are plenty of career opportunities for pupils with A levels or equivalent qualifications. Pupils should be encouraged to explore options.

Uncertainties surrounding Brexit continue to pose difficulties for the sector. At the time of writing key decisions and the eventual impact of Brexit are unknown but Brexit will continue to have a profound impact on how the Agri-Food and Drink manufacturing sector progresses. The sector is interlinked and interdependent on relationships spanning across many regional and political borders. As the uncertainty and the impacts of political decisions emerge, it will be vital that the Agri-Food industry continues to develop and maintain working relationships with the Education sector and with local and regional government.

Current challenges being faced by the sector

- Increased competition for employees within the Northern Ireland market
- Insufficient number of prospective employees available
- Uncertainty regarding future availability of EU workers and the law as it will relate to settled status ("Brexit effect")
- Recruitment departments under pressure to grow or maintain employee numbers due to historically low levels of unemployment (2.9% currently) and lack of engagement by the local population
- Increased pressure on general recruitment
- Competition with Southern Ireland

Network's recommendations for the sector when recruiting employees

The findings of the Network over the last 30 months have highlighted areas in which the sector can become more efficient and effective when recruiting employees by:

- Providing on-going updates to the local schools and Department for Communities on the level of recruitment forecast for the next 12 months
- Holding open days or information events
- Engaging via social media and promoting the company as an employer of choice
- Creating a profile for the company as an enterprise people want to work for before advertising job opportunities
- Understanding what prospective employees want and how this aligns with what the company can offer

Network's recommendations on any next stage process

Maintain collaboration to mitigate against skills and recruitment challenges that may result for any new political arrangements. A co-ordinated approach will be key to success here in view of the many components that are involved.

Maintain sector engagement with local councils, schools and career bodies.

Maintain pipeline that has been developed between schools, careers and the Government Department for Communities via contemporary emails and direct contact.

Continue and greater interaction with the education sector particularly Further Education colleges who provide employee pipelines, further training and up-skilling.

Promote support available from Government and Further Education bodies more effectively. Communicate more effectively about the assistance that is available, providing information on how to access the support.

Engage more directly with particularly smaller companies (only larger companies having the capacity to engage effectively with the Network), supporting them to promote Agri-Food sector as a career option.

Continue to:

Produce/provide ambassadors for school visits

Conduct online promotional campaigns

Organise school career days

Create funded training opportunities

Build on the Future in Food event by continuing to develop a pipeline between Education and industry, supplying information on current employment opportunities. Consider creating

an annual event with follow up and regular contacts to update both career stakeholders and “the supply chain” (ie industry).

Challenge the thinking of the sector and update it on potential new approaches to recruitment and staff retention

Increase visibility of the sector outside normal recruitment channels

Encourage employers to engage with regional councils and feed into council local initiatives to support industry career promotion, in addition to conducting direct recruitment campaigns.

Explore strategic engagement with the economically inactive, eg developing support for return to work or a Bridge to full employment programme for inactive or part-time workers.

Promote latest thinking on “increased wellbeing and “strategies to retain” staff, ie retaining staff as a cost-effective means of maintaining staffing levels, reducing recruitment costs and employee down-time. Providing education and training.

Encourage companies in the sector to become an “Employer of choice” with better people management, career development, offering transport and/or flexible hours, creating an employee-friendly environment and experience.

Promote apprenticeships, academies and encouraging companies to invest in their workforce.

Encourage companies to use sector marketing and social media to engage with prospective employees, creating awareness of the company/sector being a significant local employer offering opportunities for career progression.

Encourage companies to explore costs and benefits of automation within their production process. Huge advances have been made in this area and the costs have come down considerably. The investment required for a small robotic is affordable and comparable to an average annual salary. In the absence of available employees at operative level, automation may well be an option worth investigating.

What steps will be taken to ensure that collaboration continues as a means of addressing the common pains experienced by the sector?

HTS will:

Continue to circulate information on recruitment events and activities occurring in Northern Ireland

Maintain the webpage and twitter to promote the career attractiveness of the Agri-Food sector

Continue to attend a limited number of school career fairs

Continue to attend regional council skills group meetings

Provide representatives of the sector to any government department working within the area of recruitment, skills and employee well-being

Begin a process of research into automation and robotics, looking at how this may be introduced into the production of Agri-Food products. HTS and NIFDA are investigating Manufacturing 4.0 initiatives and have begun discussions with Invest NI.

Section Eight: Bibliography, References and Appendices

Bibliography:

- 1 Going for Growth, A Strategic Action Plan in support of the Northern Ireland Agri-Food industry, produced by the Agri-Food Strategy Board:
<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/going-growth-strategic-action-plan>
- 2 Tasty Careers: <https://tastycareers.org.uk/>
- 3 Collaborative Growth Programme: <https://www.investni.com/collaborative-growth-programme.html>
- 4 An article that appeared in the Northern Ireland BBC News on 25 July 2019:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-49111827>. Entitled: *NI's agri-food sector turnover "is close to £5bn"*
- 5 Research and analysis conducted by the Department for the Economy:
<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/eu-exit-analysis>
- 6 NIFDA website: <http://nifda.co.uk/>

List of appendices:

Appendices

Appendix 1	Governance and Communication objectives
Appendix 2	Leadership and Upskilling objectives
Appendix 3	Knowledge Transfer/Skills for Innovation objectives
Appendix 4	Curriculum Alignment objectives
Appendix 5	Career Attractiveness objectives
Appendix 6	List of HTS Network membership
Appendix 7	HTS SMART objectives
Appendix 8	HTS Project Plan
Appendix 9	HTS Terms of Reference
Appendix 10	HTS Charter
Appendix 11	HTS Communication Plan
Appendix 12	PR coverage
Appendix 13	HTS information booklet

Appendix 14	<i>Key Drivers in the Career Decision Process</i> Report
Appendix 15	<i>Links between Schools and Employers in the local Agri-Food Sector</i> Report
Appendix 16	Skills London event report, 24 November 2017
Appendix 17	Some examples of feedback from participants and stakeholders

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Appendix 1: The Network SMART Objectives: Governance and Communication

- Develop the terms of reference, reporting and administration structures for the network
- Quarterly reports which will be circulated to the Network
- Create a Network Charter which will set out the objectives of the project
- Investigate a strategy for the Network to become self-sustaining
- Maintain a stakeholder database and engagement strategy
- Grow membership by adding SMEs to the Network
- Develop an online portal for job seekers, employers and students to access information regarding opportunities in the sector
- Attend all FSAG meetings
- Design and print a booklet/leaflet highlighting the projects, goals, objectives and activities
- Identify, collate and disseminate information on current training available for the food manufacturing and processing sector

Appendix 2: The Network SMART Objectives: Leadership and Upskilling

- Source/develop/facilitate four workshops
- Linking large companies with SMEs
- Engage with 25 sector HR representatives (five per region)
- Assist in the delivery of recommendations 33 and 34 from the *Going for Growth Strategy*, ie "Industry will commit to provide placements for industry trainees" and "industry will commit to provide training to career staff on Agri-Good training opportunities"
- Encourage 20 middle managers to participate and complete training
- Investigate and research the possibility of running an Owner-Manager training programme
- Raise awareness of government funding for Essential Skills
- Develop a pilot for the food and drink industry's apprenticeships

Appendix 3: The Network Smart Objectives: Knowledge Transfer/Skills for Innovation

- Address specific export development skills gaps highlighted in the original study
- Develop a Knowledge Transfer Network, working with Higher Education providers
- Develop a skills pipeline process and network

Appendix 4: The Network SMART objectives: Curriculum Alignment

- Ensure that pupils can have access to a repertoire of industry knowledge by raising awareness and creating an understanding of the skills and requirements and opportunities within the Agri-Food sector
- Working with the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) ensure education sector has in place appropriate course material to meet future skills needs of industry

Appendix 5: The Network SMART objectives: Career Attractiveness

- Focus on developing career attractiveness in the context of the food and drink sector, with specific reference to: a) 14 – 19 year olds; b) those who are unemployed; c) overseas ex-pats
- Identify the appeal of employment in other sectors
- Attend recruitment fairs to evaluate the strength or weakness of the Northern Ireland Agri-Food marketplace

Appendix 6: List of HTS Network membership

Scoping Study Pilot Group Members:

Company	Name
Dale Farm	Jason Hempton
Dale Farm	David Dobbin
Thompsons	Declan Dobbin
Andrews Flour	Michael Moreland
Linden	Richard Moore
Dunbia	Tony O'Neill
SHS	Michael Howard
Irwins Bakery	Brian Irwin
Irwins Bakery	Sheree Totton
Allied Bakeries	Peter Henry
Moy Park	Ursula Lavery
Mash Direct	Tracy Hamilton
NIFDA	Michael Bell

Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills Network and Stakeholder Members:

ABP beef	Dalefarm	Mash Direct	United Molasses
McCann Apples	Tayto	Moy Park	Devenish
Mr Bens	Trouw Nutrition	Ufeeds	Donegal Prime Fish
WD Meats	Western Brand	Allied Bakeries	Dunbia
Andrews Flour	Ditty's Bakery	Andrews Ingredients	Elliotts Tradition
Avondale Foods	Draynes Milk	Big Pot	Evron Foods
Boojummex	Echlinville	Brunch Box	Farmlay Eggs
Bunzl	Elmgrove Foods	Bushmills	Forest Feast
Cavanagh Eggs	Fane Valley	Cloughbane Farm	Henderson Group
Cottage Catering	Finnebrogue *	CPL	Hovis
Foyle	Hastings Hotels	Frylite	Good 4u
Genesis Crafty	Henning Fish	Gilfresh	Irwins Bakery
Glens of Antrim	Hughes Mushrooms	Kerry	NIMEA
Huhtamaki	Grahams Bakery	Kitchen Bakes	Nutreco
Johnson Bros	Niche Drinks	Linwoods	Pritchitts
Kilhorne	NorBev	Maclvors	Rich Sauces
Linden Foods	Orchard Organics	Marty's Baps	Skea Eggs
Mackie Pet Foods	Punjana Tea	Staff Line	
Macneice Fruit	SHS Group (NI)	Thompson Feeds	

Key:

Company name in regular black font denotes Network Member

Company name in purple bold denotes Network Stakeholders. [This term denotes a larger company (more than 250 employees) who were involved in the Network in a Stakeholder capacity.]

*During the lifetime of the HTS Network project, Finnebrogue was an SME. At the time of writing this report it would now be considered a larger company (more than 250 employees).

Appendix 7: HTS SMART objectives

Smart Objectives Annex LoO 1707/130141065 6 July 2017

This Programme covers a 24 month period, in which the project will establish a collaborative network across the Agri-Food sector to strategically address the skills gaps that exist within the sector, and will focus on five work streams.

Governance and Communication – 11 Actions Numbers 1- 11

- The facilitator will develop the terms of reference, including appropriate governance, reporting and administration structures for the network. These reports will be updated quarterly to coincide the submission of Network claims.
- Quarterly activities will be assessed and recorded, by the facilitator, and will form the basis of quarterly reports which will be circulated to the network and accompany the claims to Invest NI
- Create a network charter which will set out the objectives of the project and the required actions of the membership and highlight the benefits and gains of membership, against expected actions of SME's
- To Investigate and identify a strategy for enabling the network to become self – sustaining, with funding for meetings, workshops and facilitation costs.
- To develop/maintain and implement a stakeholder database and associated stakeholder engagement strategy.
- Grow membership by adding SME's to the Network, as the project develops. In addition, maintain formal engagement with the local council economic developments. Reporting quarterly to Invest NI on the results.
- To develop, maintain and implement a communications Strategy across Network partners.
- To develop an online portal for job seekers, employers and students to access information regarding opportunities in the sector. The online provision will nevertheless be budget dependant.
- Attend all FSAG (or revised version of) meetings to advise and take soundings, as set out in the recommendation 35 of the Going for Growth Strategy (2013)
- Design and print a booklet/leaflet highlighting the projects, goals, objectives and activities. This is to be disseminated to all target 120 SME's
- Identify, collate and disseminate information on current training available for the food manufacturing and processing sector, creating a central point where SME's can access information on support available.

Leadership and Up skilling - 8 Actions numbers 12 - 19

- Source /develop/ facilitate four workshops designed to assist in the identification and development of employees for suitable up skilling.

- Linking larger companies with SME's to enable knowledge transfer and dissemination of best practice.
- The engage with 25 sector HR representatives (5 per region) to develop a process that will enable on going monitoring of specific skills issues within sector and develop tailored solutions to address.
- To assist in the delivery of recommendations 33 and 34 from the Going for Growth Strategy, i.e. "Industry will commit to provide placements for industry trainees" and "industry will commit to provide training to career staff on Agri- Food training opportunities"
- Encourage 20 middle managers to participate and complete training by utilizing existing management training in the following areas; lean manufacturing; sales and marketing; category management; professional selling; export marketing.
- Investigate and research the possibility of running an Owner-Manager training programme. Look at modes of delivery to increase uptake.
- Raise awareness of government funding for Essential Skills, this will be included into a "Skills Support" information pack which will be compiled as part of the communication theme. Dissemination of this information will be recorded and reported by the facilitator.
- Using the apprenticeships in Engineering at levels 2 and 3 develop a pilot for the food and drinks industry. Working with FE Colleges to have a pilot scheme in place before the end of the two year project.

Knowledge Transfer/ Skills for Innovation – 3 Actions numbers 20- 22

- To Address specific export development skills gaps highlighted in the original study, including those related to export development e.g. innovation, entrepreneurship, business planning; develop methods by which these gaps can be addressed. (Including engagement with current skills programmes being offered); provide focus on food science, production and export business planning; work with SME's who have the capacity to provide new opportunities and build business within these areas.
- To explore opportunity to develop a Knowledge Transfer Network. Working with the Higher Education providers to exploit the existing experience and knowledge within the processing Food sector. Developing a process to share and transfer skills across the sector.
- Develop a skills pipeline process and network, using the network for referral, engagement and assessment; support SME's into regular activity and routines that help them connect with potential employees; provide a route map into the industry, ensuring continued connection between the varied stakeholders.

Curriculum Alignment - 2 Actions numbers 23 - 24

- The curriculum activity aims to ensure that pupils can have access to a repertoire of Industry knowledge by raising awareness and creating an understanding of the skills and requirements and opportunities within the Agri Food sector. Delivery of this will be through provision of hard copy and online links to Food Industry careers

Workplan Timeline HTS Project	2017 Qtr 1	2017 Qtr 2	2017 Qtr 3	2017 Qtr 4	2018 Qtr 1	2018 Qtr 2	2018 Qtr 3	2018 Qtr 4
Hard copy TOR and management structures created and signed off by Steering Committee								
Quarterly activities will be assessed and recorded into quarterly reports, circulated and accompanied with the claims								
Create a Network Charter which will set out the objectives of the project - signed by all at the beginning								
Strategy paper on self sustaining programme investigated and presented to the SC by early 2018								
To develop / maintain and implement a stakeholder database								
Grow Membership and maintain formal engagement with local councils and education providers								
To develop, maintain and implement a Communications Strategy across network partners.								
To develop an online portal for job seekers, employers and students to access information								
Attend all FSAG (or revised version of) meetings to advise and take soundings from								
Design and print a booklet / leaflet highlighting the projects goals, objectives and activities								
Identify, collate and disseminate information on current training available for the food manufacturing and processing sector.								

Current Workforce Leadership and Up skilling	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4
Facilitate four workshops designed in the identification of employees for suitable up-skilling								
Linking larger companies with SMEs to enable knowledge transfer and dissemination of best practice								
To engage with 25 sector HR representatives (five Per Region) to develop a process								
To assist in delivery of placements for industry trainees' and training to career staff on Agri-Food								
Encourage 20 middle managers to complete training in the following areas: lean manufacturing; sales and marketing, category management; professional selling; export marketing.								
Investigate and research the possibility of running an Owner-Manager training programme								
Raise awareness of government funding for Essential Skills - this will be included in a "Skills Support"								
Using the Apprenticeship in Engineering at Levels 2 and 3 develop a pilot for the food and drinks industry.								
Using the network promote and encourage Pilot 30 engineering apprenticeships in food and drinks industry								

Knowledge Transfer/Skills for Innovation		Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4
To address specific export development skills gaps highlighted in the original Scoping Study									
To explore opportunities to development a Knowledge Transfer Network, working with HE providers.									
Develop a skills pipeline process and network. Using the network for, referral, engagement and assessment.									
Curriculum Alignment									
Creating awareness and understanding, across the education and careers advisory sector, of the skills requirements and opportunities within the Agri Food sector.									
Working with the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to ensure the education sector has in place appropriate course material to meet the future skills needs of industry.									
Career Attractiveness									
Target 20 School Career visits Per Year - provide feedback and submissions to DEARA education review									

<p>approximately 100,000 to 200,000 in the United States, and approximately 100,000 in the United Kingdom.</p>	
<p>The disease is caused by a virus, which is spread by contact with infected animals, or by contact with infected people.</p>	
<p>The disease is characterized by a fever, headache, muscle aches, and a rash. The rash is usually a maculopapular rash, which is a rash that consists of small, raised bumps.</p>	
<p>The disease is usually self-limiting, and most people recover within a few days. However, in some cases, the disease can lead to complications, such as pneumonia, encephalitis, and death.</p>	
<p>The disease is caused by a virus, which is spread by contact with infected animals, or by contact with infected people. The disease is usually self-limiting, and most people recover within a few days. However, in some cases, the disease can lead to complications, such as pneumonia, encephalitis, and death.</p>	
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<p>The disease is caused by a virus, which is spread by contact with infected animals, or by contact with infected people. The disease is usually self-limiting, and most people recover within a few days. However, in some cases, the disease can lead to complications, such as pneumonia, encephalitis, and death.</p>	

Appendix 9: HTS Terms of Reference



Harvesting tomorrows skills

Collaborative network

Terms of reference

March 2017

Purpose and Context

In 2016 NIFDA completed a scoping study into the 'Skills Gaps and Sector Attractiveness of the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Sector'.

In response to the findings of the scoping study, NIFDA with support from Invest NI has set up a collaborative network to address these issues and to facilitate closer cooperation across the sector.

The Parties individually referred to in this Agreement as "a Member" and collectively as **Harvesting Tomorrows Skills (HTS NETWORK)** will work to address the range of issues identified in the NIFDA scoping study. It will work to develop links between Industry and NI stakeholders with a responsibility for industry promotion and skills development.

This document outlines the respective rights and obligations in relation to their collaboration in the continued working on the issues of skills and sector attractiveness. The plan will address the needs and gaps identified by the Skills collaborative network scoping study, completed by NIFDA in February 2016.

In support of the targets set out in the Going for Growth plan, the key objective will be to create a structure and processes that will assist the sector in finding suitable talent, reducing the skills gaps and coordinating the industry to work as a single entity.

Objectives of the HTS Network

This programme will cover a 24 month period and establish a collaborative SME network across the Agri-Food sector. A network of SMEs that will Work in concert to promote and strategically address the skills gaps that exists within the Agri-Food sector.

The Membership of the network will be drawn from across NI and from the business and sectors listed below:

HTS Network Membership Profile,

- NIFDA
- NI Food and Drink SMEs
- Local Council Economic Development departments
- Further & Higher Education Departments
- NISCA
- Careers Service
- Food and Drink Sector Skills
- DEARA
- Invest NI

The work programme is divided into five themes, each of which will address the issues of skills gaps and sector attractiveness.

Themes

1. Governance and Communication
2. Current Workforce Leadership and Up-skilling
3. Skills for Innovation
4. Curriculum Alignment
5. Career Attractiveness

Aligned Work streams

- (A) Create a collaborative Industry skills network.
- (B) Increase knowledge and skills that will have a positive and enduring effect on SMEs.
- (C) Development of education curriculum-based training to increase the focus on the Food and Drink manufacturing sector.
- (D) Researching and understanding the key drivers in the career decision process in regard to the Agri-Food Sector.
- (E) Promoting current training workshops to address the business skills gaps.

See also Project outputs in section 4

Clusters

A key objective and management structure of the network will be the creation of regional clusters. Linking the Food and Drink SMES within their education region, (five areas) with the local FE and HE education bodies, along with the economic development departments from the local Councils. The aim of this will be to identify and bring together key local contacts to enable the development of closer and regular liaison across these sectors. The clusters will adopt a work plan to reflect the themes and objectives of the HTS network. Each Cluster will work under the supervision and with the support of the NIFDA appointed facilitator.

The project facilitator will co-ordinate the collaborative network through the work plan set out in the programme workbook, comprising of 10 project outputs (Section 4) and 34 SMART objectives set out in Appendix 1.

1. Purpose of this Term Of Reference

This document sets out the Terms of Reference under which the HTS Network operates. The membership agrees to work together to implement the agreed targets and objectives of this project.

The Term Of Reference will remain in effect from 1 February 2017 (Commencement Date) to 31 July 2019.

Harry Hamilton Consulting based in Belfast Mill, 71-75 Percy Street, Belfast BT 13 2HW shall be key contact facilitator and Project Facilitator for the Network. As such he shall retain overall responsibility for ensuring the performance of its obligations under this Terms of Reference.

Throughout the duration of the HTS Network Project the partners agree to maintain regular communications with the Facilitator, attend meetings and supply information which relates to the objectives of the Network.

2 Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibilities of The Harvesting Tomorrows Skills Project

Promotional Activity in Disseminating Information relating to the HTS Project objectives across the Network membership.

- 2.1 HTS will provide a reasonable level of assistance via telephone, email, and/or fax in connection with its duties outlined in this letter to HTS Network from the Commencement Date until 31 July 2019.
- 2.2 The HTS Network will provide contact details of the Network client base if authorised to do so by the relevant Client Companies. HTS Network members agree to abide by its legal obligations, including its data protection obligations, with respect to such information, and any other information provided to HTS Network by NIFDA, at all times. For the avoidance of doubt, NIFDA shall not release such information to any third party unless expressly permitted to do so by the relevant Client Company.

- 2.3 HTS will inform the Client Companies and the food and drink industry within the Home Markets generally of the HTS Network activities and outputs, until 31 July 2019.

Training

- 2.4 HTS will facilitate at least four full-day workshop opportunities with invited Client Companies to discuss skills development, recruitment and up-skilling before 31 July 2019.
- 2.5 HTS will facilitate a process to encourage the increase in up-skilling current employees within the collaborative network.

Evaluation

- 2.6 HTS Network will facilitate programme assessments following Commencement Date, and in the month prior to completion of the HTS Network programme on 31 July 2019 with agreed actions to flow out of both assessments.

3. Responsibilities of HTS Network Members

In return for the above, HTS Network members agrees to implement and work in collaboration to achieve the objectives and targets of the HTS Project.

The collaborative network will cover such activities as set out below:

- 3.1 Appoint and maintain a named single point of contact to coordinate the client companies involvement with the programme and act as a central contact.
- 3.2 Attend collaborative meetings and respond in a timely manner to information requests by HTS facilitator.
- 3.3 To the extent possible, to provide the HTS Network with no less than three months' prior written notice of the anticipated replacement of the HTS Network contact person for the project.
- 3.4 Develop, and thereafter maintain, standard operating procedures for Client Companies who wish to take advantage of the services offered by HTS Network or agents working on behalf of the HTS Network as agreed between the parties from time to time.
- 3.5 New Members may be appointed to the network by recommendation of the Facilitator and or any existing member.
- 3.6 Ensure a response to all HTS Network queries within 14 DAYS of the initial query being raised
- 3.7 Discharge its responsibilities under this Terms of Reference and under any contracts it enters into with partner Network Client Companies in accordance with (a) all applicable laws (b) the reasonable care and skill expected of a skilled and experienced operator in the industry for similar services, and (c) all generally recognised best commercial practices and standards in the industry for similar services
- 3.8 Co-operate with the HTS Facilitator and Consultants as appointed as they may reasonably require, including providing any information, in connection with the

performance of any obligations assumed by them under this Terms Of Reference or otherwise in relation to the HTS Network.

For the avoidance of doubt, the obligations outlined in this letter of agreement are ongoing obligations which shall endure throughout the duration of this Terms of Reference agreement.

3.9 Meetings; Rules and procedures

- A. Meetings of the network may take place either within or as a cross section of the regional clusters.
- B. Network members will receive at least seven days' notice of meetings of the network. They will be informed by email.
- C. Meetings of the Network will not have a minimum quorum due to the five sub cluster profiles of the Network.
- D. Any material change in the smart objectives will require the agreement of 50% of the network members and Invest NI.
- E. Meetings will be chaired by the HTS Facilitator.
- F. Except as expressly stated in this agreement any matters to be decided upon at any meeting of the network shall be agreed by a simple majority of those present and entitled to vote.
- G. A member is entitled to appoint another member as his proxy.
- H. A member may attend, speak and vote in a meeting of the network by means of telephone attendance.

4. Project Smart Objectives

Smart Objectives Ref; LoO 1707/130141065 6 July 2017

This Programme covers a 24 month period, in which the project will establish a collaborative network across the Agri-Food sector to strategically address the skills gaps that exist within the sector, and will focus on five work streams.

Governance and Communication – 11 Actions Numbers 1- 11

- The facilitator will develop the Terms of Reference, including appropriate governance, reporting and administration structures for the network. These reports will be updated quarterly to coincide with the submission of Network claims.
- Quarterly activities will be assessed and recorded, by the facilitator, and will form the basis of quarterly reports which will be circulated to the network and accompany the claims to Invest NI
- Create a network charter which will set out the objectives of the project and the required actions of the membership and highlight the benefits and gains of membership, against expected actions of SMEs

- To investigate and identify a strategy for enabling the network to become self-sustaining, with funding for meetings, workshops and facilitation costs.
- To develop/maintain and implement a stakeholder database and associated stakeholder engagement strategy.
- Grow membership by adding SMEs to the network, as the project develops. In addition, maintain formal engagement with the local council economic development departments, reporting quarterly to Invest NI on the results.
- To develop, maintain and implement a Communications Strategy across Network partners.
- To develop an online portal for job seekers, employers and students to access information regarding opportunities in the sector. The online provision will nevertheless be budget dependant.
- Attend all FSAG (or revised version of) meetings to advise and take soundings, as set out in the recommendation 35 of the Going for Growth Strategy (2013)
- Design and print a booklet/leaflet highlighting the projects, goals, objectives and activities. This is to be disseminated to all target 120 SMEs
- Identify, collate and disseminate information on current training available for the food manufacturing and processing sector, creating a central point where SMEs can access information on support available.

Leadership and Up-skilling - 8 Actions numbers 12 - 19

- Source /develop/ facilitate four workshops designed to assist in the identification and development of employees for suitable up skilling.
-
- Linking larger companies with SMEs to enable knowledge transfer and dissemination of best practice.
- Engage with 25 sector HR representatives (five per region) to develop a process that will enable on going monitoring of specific skills issues within sector and develop tailored solutions to address the same.
- To assist in the delivery of recommendations 33 and 34 from the Going for Growth Strategy, i.e. "Industry will commit to provide placements for industry trainees" and "industry will commit to provide training to career staff on Agri-Food training opportunities"
- Encourage 20 middle managers to participate and complete training by utilising existing management training in the following areas; lean manufacturing; sales and marketing; category management; professional selling; export marketing.
- Investigate and research the possibility of running an Owner-Manager training programme. Look at modes of delivery to increase uptake.
- Raise awareness of government funding for Essential Skills, this will be included into a "Skills Support" information pack which will be compiled as part of the

communication theme. Dissemination of this information will be recorded and reported by the facilitator.

- Using the apprenticeships in Engineering at levels 2 and 3, develop a pilot for the food and drinks industry. Working with FE Colleges to have a pilot scheme in place before the end of the two year project.

Knowledge Transfer/ Skills for Innovation – 3 Actions numbers 20- 22

- To Address specific export development skills gaps highlighted in the original study, including those related to export development e.g. innovation, entrepreneurship, business planning; develop methods by which these gaps can be addressed. (Including engagement with current skills programmes being offered); provide focus on food science, production and export business planning; work with SMEs who have the capacity to provide new opportunities and build business within these areas.
- To explore opportunities to develop a Knowledge Transfer Network. Working with the Higher/Further Education providers to exploit the existing experience and knowledge within the Food processing sector. Develop a process to share and transfer skills across the sector.
- Develop a skills pipeline process and network, using the network for referral, engagement and assessment; support SMEs into regular activity and routines that help them connect with potential employees; provide a route map into the industry, ensuring continued connection between the varied stakeholders.

Curriculum Alignment - 2 Actions numbers 23 - 24

- The curriculum activity aims to ensure that pupils can have access to a repertoire of Industry knowledge by raising awareness and creating an understanding of the skills, requirements and opportunities within the Agri-Food sector. Delivery of this will be through the provision of hard copy and online links to Food Industry careers promotion material; presenting at careers conferences and via direct interaction with schools and education boards.
- Working with the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to ensure the education sector has in place appropriate course material to meet the future skills needs of industry; working to have included in the secondary course material, information which will inform and educate pupils on the varied opportunities and benefits of working with the Agri-Food sector.

Career Attractiveness – 6 Actions numbers 25 – 30

- Focus on developing career attractiveness in the context of the food and drink sector, with specific reference to:
 - 14-19 year olds; methodology will include engaging with schools in relation to Open Days/Career Days
 - Those who are unemployed
 - Overseas ex-Pats
- Identify the appeal of employment in other sectors, (IT, Engineering or Public Sector) in relation to pay conditions or opportunity.

- Attend recruitment fairs to evaluate the strength or weakness of the Northern Ireland Agri Food market place; using desk research to benchmark our nearest competitor markets –the UK and Europe; identify four key recruitment fairs; attend, research and report on competitor employment markets and recruitment targeting process. This will help inform the industry on the key influencing factors in employee job acceptance, highlighting strengths and weakness in the NI employment market.
- Investigate how the principles and processes embodied in other models such as “Bring IT On” (ICT Sector) could be applied to post primary engagement within the Food and Drink Sector.
- Fifteen Ambassadors to be identified and recruited during the lifetime of the project. These will be recruited from the network and will reflect the industry profile, meat, poultry, bakery, dairy, drinks etc
- All Ambassadors to receive training on presentation skills provided by HTS

5. Project Management and Steering Board

- 5.1 The HTS Project Facilitator will be responsible for the progression and delivery of the programme objectives.
- 5.2 The HTS Project Facilitator will be supported by a Steering Board, which will meet no less than 4 times per year.
- 5.3 The Steering Board will review goals, plan, and priorities and give guidance on new activities.
- 5.4 The Steering Board will report to the NIFDA Board and the Ministerial Future Skills Action Group.
- 5.5 The programme will make a quarterly report to Invest NI, highlighting progress against objectives and identifying any major issues/impinging on progress.
- 5.6 The plan will be updated on a quarterly basis reflecting the dynamic and changing needs of the industry.

Where possible the steering board membership will be reflect the profile of the HTS grouping.

6. Status of this Letter

Save where expressly stated as legally binding, nothing in this letter shall impose any legally binding obligations on either of the parties, including creating any obligation on the part of either party to make any payment to the other or creating any legal relationship between the parties beyond that of independent parties acting at arms' length.

The HTS Network and each Partner Company individually, reserves the right to, acting in its discretion, at any time during the term of this letter, cease membership and any obligations with The HTS Network. It also reserves the right to remove or procure the removal of all references to the named “Client Company” from any promotional material or documentation produced by it or connected to the HTS Network programme, including the website <http://www.nifda.co.uk> In particular the HTS Network may take this, or other, action where it determines that the Client Company has materially failed to meet its obligations as set out under this Terms of Reference.

The construction, validity and performance of this letter shall be governed by the laws of Northern Ireland and the parties irrevocably submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of Northern Ireland.

Duration of this Letter

This letter of agreement shall take effect from the Commencement Date and remain in effect until 30th April 2019.

Up to 30th April 2019, the terms of this ToR letter may be updated or amended at any time through the written agreement of each Partner/Client Company. For the avoidance of doubt, NIFDA has the express authority to negotiate such amendments.

8. Confidentiality

Any information supplied to either party by the other pursuant to this letter, which is either (a) identified by the disclosing party at the time of disclosure as confidential or commercially sensitive, or (b) would be understood to be confidential or commercially sensitive by a reasonable businessperson (Confidential Information) shall be treated as strictly confidential by the receiving party and shall not be disclosed to any third party save to its professional advisors (unless required to do so by law or to the extent that any such Confidential Information is already in the public domain).

Each party agrees, in consideration of the reciprocal benefits to be received by that party as a result of its entry into this letter of agreement, that it shall not use any Confidential Information in any way whatsoever other than for the purposes contemplated in this letter. This clause is legally binding.

8.1 Confidentiality Obligations

A network member shall not:

- a) Use any confidential information for any purpose other than in accordance with this agreement;
- b) Copy or otherwise reproduce and confidential information, either in whole or in part, unless such copying or reproduction has been authorised by the disclosing member.

9. General

9.1 Any notice required by this Agreement to be given by either party to the other shall be in writing and shall be served by sending the same to the address of the party as set out in this Agreement or any other address notified by such party as its address for service. Such notice shall be deemed to have been received by the addressee forty eight hours after posting.

9.2 The Client shall give the Company 30 days notice, if it wishes to exit the HTS project.

9.3 The Company will give 30 days notice of termination of this Agreement to the Client if the Company determines that the Client is not meeting its obligations under clause 3 above.

- 9.4 The Steering Committee reserve the right to recruit or replace any member clients as is deemed appropriate.

10. Term and Termination

- 10.1 This agreement commences on the 1 March 2017 (Commencement Date) to 31 July 2019.
- 10.2 A member can terminate his membership in the consortium by giving one months' notice to the other members existing at the time.
- 10.3 A member can be expelled from the network by a vote of the remaining members for any action which could be considered a Material breach of any its obligations under this agreement including Insolvency.

11 Dispute Resolution

Save as otherwise provided in this agreement, in the event that any disputes, any questions of any nature arise between the members or any members in relation to this agreement or any matter relating to the affairs of the Network or the rights, duties or liabilities of any member:

11.1 The parties to such a dispute or question shall attempt to resolve the same by negotiation:

11.2 If such a dispute or question is not resolved within 14 days, the parties shall refer the dispute to the Steering Committee who will attempt to resolve the dispute.

12 Liability

12.1 Liability of the members to each other is limited to the obligations set out in section 3 of this agreement.

12.2 This agreement creates no obligations or duties between the members of the HTS Network and outside third parties

13 Notices

Any notice required to be given under this agreement must be given or served in writing and shall be deemed duly served if the same shall be;

13.1 Delivered personally to the member.

13.2 Left at the registered office or sent by first class post and addressed to the member.

13.3 Sent to the member via email at an address which has been notified for use by other members.

14 Partnership

Nothing within this agreement is intended to create a partnership or joint venture of any kind between the members, or any of them, or to authorize any member to act as agent for any

other. Save where expressly stated in this Agreement, no member will have the authority to act in the name or on behalf of or otherwise to bind any other member.

15 Waiver

No forbearance or delay by any member in enforcing its rights will prejudice or restrict the rights of that member, and no waiver of any such rights or of any breach of any Agreement terms will be deemed to be a waiver of any other right or of any later breach.

16 Governing Law and Jurisdiction

This agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with Northern Ireland Law and each Member agrees to submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Northern Ireland Courts, any claim or matter arising under or in connection with this Agreement or the legal relationships established by this agreement.

17. Signatures

Presuming the terms of this letter of agreement are acceptable, please sign and date both copies of this letter below. Keep one copy for your records and return the other to Harry Hamilton, on behalf of HTS Network at Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association Ltd, Belfast Mills, 71- 75 Percy Street, BT13 2HW.

This letter may be executed in any number of counterparts, each of which when executed shall constitute a duplicate original, but all the counterparts shall together constitute the one agreement. No counterpart shall be effective until each party has executed at least one counterpart.

Yours sincerely,

_____ for and on behalf of
Harvesting Tomorrows Skills Network

(Signature and Position)

AGREED AND ACCEPTED

_____ for and on behalf of
Client Partner

(Signature and Position)

(Date)



Appendix 10: HTS Charter



Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills Advisory Group Charter

Purpose

The HTS facilitator will develop a Term of Reference statement for the Harvesting Tomorrows Skills network and have this agreed by the Steering committee and network members.

The HTS steering group will also provide oversight and advice to the project facilitator in selecting the course of actions. The will reflect consideration of various stakeholders, the goals, issues and objectives. The Steering group will aim to address the concerns, and find the appropriate balance among competing interests.

Advisory Group Goals

Advise the Facilitator about key aspects of the project, provide a Sector perspective on key considerations, and be a sounding board for project deliverables.

Work towards consensus among the Network members on the desired project goals, alternatives, work schedule, and any mitigation measures to be adopted.

Project Outcome

The process will be considered a success if:

- The Network achieves the objectives as set out in the HTS Terms Of Reference.
- The Network achieves a clear and meaningful collaboration in its actions in tackling the skills shortage within the sector.
- The project objectives are achieved within the time schedule set out within the ToR.

Terms of membership

Network Members agree to work with the Facilitator and other members in a meaningful and supportive fashion. Throughout the planned timeframe of the project.

A member's position on the HTS Steering group may be declared vacant if the member:

- Resigns from the Network. (this should be in writing and forwarded to the facilitator.

In a case where a member's position is declared vacant, the Facilitator may appoint an alternative representative from the same interest group to fill the position.

Advisory Group Operating Guidelines

Convening of Meetings

- Meetings will be held at the time and place chosen by the HTS Facilitator.
- The Network members will be informed of meetings through email or direct mail, depending on his/her preference, at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

Communication

- Project documents and notices will be emailed to the network members.

Conduct of meetings

- Meetings will be open to all.
- Meetings will be facilitated.
- Informed alternates are acceptable and encouraged if the Network member cannot attend.
- Meetings will end with a clear understanding of expectations and assignments for next steps.
- Meetings are expected to be two to three hours and not exceed three hours.
- The Facilitator will keep a record of meeting attendees, key issues raised, and actions required. Comments from individual members will generally not be attributed and a verbatim record of the meeting will not be prepared.
- The previous meeting record and a meeting agenda will be forwarded to members of the Network at least one week before the next meeting. Any changes to the record of the past meetings shall be in writing and forwarded to the Facilitator prior to the next meeting.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Steering Group and Network members are an advisory group to the facilitator:

Network members agree to:

- Provide specific local expertise, including identifying emerging local issues;
- Review project reports and comment promptly;
- Attend all meetings possible and prepare appropriately;
- Complete all necessary assignments prior to each meeting;
- Relay information to their constituents after each meeting and gather information/feedback from their constituents as practicable before each meeting;
- Articulate and reflect the interests that advisory group members bring to the table;
- Maintain a focus on solutions that benefit the entire study area;
- Present its recommendations for the project at the end of the planning process.

Facilitator and the consultant team agree to:

- Provide network members the opportunity to collaborate with other agencies and groups on making recommendations for the project;
- Effectively manage the scope, schedule and budget;
- Keep Network partners informed of progress;
- Provide documentation to support recommendations;
- Provide technical expertise;
- Brief local decision makers and produce briefing materials and reports;
- Provide early notification of The Network meetings and provide ten working days to review and comment on technical reports and other documents;

Communication

The Network members will be informed of meetings through email or direct mail, depending on his/her preference, at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

- Project documents and notices will be emailed to the network members.

Decision Making

The Network is primarily advisory. In those areas where it has some decision-making authority, members will strive to reach agreement by consensus at a level that indicates that all partners are willing to "live with" the proposed action. Partners will strive to work expeditiously and try to avoid revisiting decisions once made. If agreement cannot be reached on a particular issue, The Steering group will retain final decision-making authority.

Conflict Resolution

When an issue arises that cannot be easily resolved, Network members agree to:

- Remember that controversial projects are unlikely to receive funding, so the intent of all parties is to resolve issues so the project can be funded.
- Determine if the issue should be resolved within or outside of the Network and participate however is appropriate.
- Ensure the appropriate decision makers are at the table to resolve the issue.

Appendix 11: HTS Communication Plan



Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills

HTS Communication Strategy and work plan March 2017

1. Communication – Objectives and Key Message

The aim of this document is to set out the communication process of the HTS network. It will also highlight the key message and agreed objectives of the group.

The aim of the collaborative HTS network is to address the Food and Drink sector attractiveness and skills gaps.

HTS intend to bring together a range of stakeholders from across NI to work collaboratively in addressing these issues.

The overall intention will be to complete a range of actions to engage with the wider employment and training marketplace, increasing the awareness and understanding of the industry. A key output will be making the sector more competitive by reducing the skills gaps.

This programme covers a 24 month period starting in March 2017 and will establish a collaborative SME network across the Agri-Food sector.

This network of SMEs will work in conjunction with a range of industry stakeholders within the area of Careers, Recruitment, Upskilling and Economic Development.

The work programme is divided into five themes, each of which will address the issues of skills gaps and sector attractiveness with the aim of increasing SME productivity, competitiveness and profitability.

The Five Themes are:

- (1) Create a Collaborative Industry skills network,
- (2) Increase knowledge and skills that will have a positive and enduring effect on SMEs,
- (3) Development of Education curriculum-based training to increase the focus on the Food and Drink manufacturing sector,
- (4) Researching and understanding the key drivers in the career decision process in regard to the Agri-Food Sector,
- (5) Promoting current training workshops to address the business generating skills gaps.

NOTE **A key objective and management structure of the network will be the creation of 5 regional sub clusters.

2. NIFDA: The Lead Organisation

NIFDA is a membership based association, working together to build a sustainable and internationally competitive food and drink industry.

As a not-for-profit organisation NIFDA is committed to helping Northern Ireland food and beverage companies compete successfully and to represent and promote their interests.

NIFDA was established to provide services to enhance, promote, inform, educate and develop member business

The three points below highlight our interest in developing this network:

Support the Agri-Food industry within a framework of strategic actions to increase the attractiveness of the sector.

Develop strategic plans to focus on reducing the skills gaps and provide support and understanding of employee up-skilling.

A programme of measures which ensure higher levels of engagement in the recruitment markets. Providing a higher qualified and skilled workforce that will be the foundation for sales growth in local and International markets.

3. Organisational Objectives and Communications Objectives

The communications objectives will focus on two specific audiences.

Firstly - the Industry itself; the objective here will be to inform and engage with the sector to educate them on the options and opportunities to develop a better skilled and more productive work force.

Secondly - the recruitment market is a very competitive place, and if the Food and Drink sector is going to compete then it needs to present its case in a more effective and engaging way.

4. Identifying Stakeholders and the Structure

Below is a detailed description of the main audiences – stakeholders - who are both external and internal to the sector.

The key audience will be, NIFDA Members – Food and Drink SMEs – Local education representation - Local Councils – Career Advisors and private recruitment companies.

The key structure will be linking the Food and Drink SMES within their Education region, (five areas) with the local FE and HE education bodies along with the Economic Development departments from the local Councils.

Identifying and bringing together key local contacts to enable the development of closer and regular liaison across these sectors.

The HTS Facilitation Manager will be responsible for the progression and delivery of the programme objectives. He will also be supported by a Steering Board, which will meet no less than four times per year. The Steering Board will review goals, plan, and prioritise while providing guidance on each of these activities.

The success of the programme will be measured against five project themes which will be delivered through the 29 SMART objectives set out in the work plan section.

5. Key Communications Methods

Below is a list of actions that will be adopted to communicate across the network. It is vital to the success of the project that all engaged bodies maintain regular contact.

- Terms of Reference and management structures created
- Quarterly reports circulated throughout network
- Regular Workshops will be held across the network
- Maintain and disseminate information across the stakeholder database
- To develop an online portal/ webpage on the NIFDA website updated with all relevant information
- Design and print a booklet highlighting the projects goals, objectives and activities.
- All information will be provided directly to network members and available through the NIFDA website.

6. Evaluating success

- Creation of a sustainable network

- Regular and planned communication and interaction through meetings or online forums
- Reduction in the reported skills gaps recorded in the NIFDA scoping study
- Increase in the attendance by Agri-Food companies at careers events and school open days.
- Increase of up skilling by SMEs
- Increased awareness of Agri-Food in the school curriculum

7. Work Plan

Below is the target work plan for the network, indicating the objectives and the indicative timescale. Some of the actions will be ongoing throughout the 24 month period while others are time specific for completion.



The Harvesting Tomorrows' Skills Network for the Food & Drink Industry is funded by InvestNI as part of the Collaborative Networking programme

Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills Coverage Report

2017 - 2019

Morrow
communications



Irish Farmers Journal / More / Northern Ireland / 47% of NI agri food employers unable to recruit required staff

47% of NI agri food employers unable to recruit required staff

By Peter McCann on 22 May 2017



A two-year programme has been launched with the aim of recruiting additional people into the industry.

A survey by NIFDA found that 56% of school leavers were unaware of the opportunities available within the agri food sector.

A survey of companies in the agri food sector in Northern Ireland has shown that 47% of employers are unable to recruit staff with the required level of skills.

The six-month consultation by the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association (NIFDA) identified skills gaps, a lack of training and negative perceptions of working in agri food as issues for the industry.

The exercise also questioned school leavers, with 56% of respondents stating that they were unaware of the opportunities available within the agri food sector.

"Misconceptions about the sector, such as low pay, poor conditions, production line and shift work, are hurdles which must be overcome. In reality, the industry offers an array of options, competitive salaries and career development opportunities," said Harry Hamilton from NIFDA.

Programme

A two-year programme has been launched with the aim of recruiting additional people into the industry by allowing businesses to engage with stakeholders such as schools, colleges, local councils and business support organisations.

Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills is being led by NIFDA and funded by Invest NI to address the skills gap in the agri food sector and attract more young people into the industry.

Niall Casey from Invest NI said that the programme would allow companies and stakeholders to exploit opportunities to enhance the sector's competitive edge with recruitment. "A well-trained workforce is critical to any business growth," he said.



A new collaborative network has been launched to tackle the skills shortage within the food and drink sector and drive future growth across the industry.

Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills (HTS) which is funded by Invest Northern Ireland, is a two-year programme which supports the targets identified in the Agri-Food Strategy Board's 'Going for Growth' action plan – specifically recruiting an additional 15,000 people to the sector by 2020.

Invest NI has offered £169,400 to support the HTS network which, led by NI Food & Drink Association (NIFDA) is focussed on improving knowledge, addressing the skills gap and enhancing the sector's career appeal to young people. Businesses participating in the network include Dunbia, Thompsons, Linden Foods, Mash Direct and Moy Park.

Targeting SMEs in particular, the network will engage with stakeholders such as schools, colleges, local councils and business support organisations to collaboratively tackle the skills deficit.

The initiative stems from a six month consultation with the sector – also supported by Invest NI and led by NIFDA – which clearly identified skills gaps, a lack of training, and negative perceptions of the food & drink sector as major stumbling blocks.

47% of employers surveyed said they were unable to recruit staff with the required level of skills, while 56% of school-leavers stated they were completely unaware of the range of career opportunities available across the sector.

Harry Hamilton is project facilitator of HTS and believes a collaborative, industry-led approach is necessary to tackle the skills gap issue head on.

"As NI's biggest employer, the priority is to attract real talent to our food & drink sector. We also need to develop a people pipeline across all levels and abilities which will ensure the sector's long term viability."

With uncertainty regarding Brexit also impacting agri-food industries, Harry highlighted the need to change mind-set: "Misconceptions about the sector such as low pay, poor conditions, production line and shift work are hurdles which must be overcome."

"In reality the industry offers an array of options, competitive salaries and career development opportunities. HTS aims to convince people with different skills and aptitudes, including those with business acumen and leadership potential that the agri-food sector is the right choice."

HTS will collaborate with the industry to champion investment in training so those already working in the sector are upskilled, motivated and committed to it for the long term, as well as engaging with the appropriate educational providers.

Niall Casey, Invest NI's Director of Skills & Competitiveness said: "A well trained workforce is critical to any business growth. The food and drink manufacturers participating in the **Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills** network are focused on addressing the areas which can help safeguard the future development of our Agri Food industry.

"Invest NI's funding through our Collaborative Growth Programme will help the companies and stakeholders involved to collectively explore ways to scope and exploit opportunities to enhance their competitive edge.

Tracy Hamilton of Mash Direct, which is participating in the network said:

"Attracting and retaining high calibre, ambitious people is essential for the life-blood of the sector. We welcome this new initiative and would encourage SMEs to get on-board. Collaboratively we will have more impact and not only boost our individual businesses, but help the wider industry meet its full potential."

Food producers hampered by future skills gap



Pictured at the launch of Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills is a new collaborative network which aims to address the skills gap in the food and drink sector. From left to right: Niall Casey, Director of Skills & Competitiveness, Invest NI; Linda Jamison, Invest NI; Angela Wilson, LP Associates; Sheree Tooten, Invest NI; Michael Bell and Harry Hamilton, NIFDA; Tracy Hamilton, Mash Direct; Tracy Blackler, Dublin; Lucy Smyth, Mr Ben's; and Heather Smyth, Marry's Baps.

Published: 13:07 Tuesday 23 May 2017

A new collaborative network has been launched to tackle the skills shortage within the food and drink sector and drive future growth across the industry.

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"As Northern Ireland's biggest employer, the priority is to attract real talent to our food and drink sector. We also need to develop a people pipeline across all levels and abilities which will ensure the sector's long term viability."

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Businesses participating in the network include Dunbia, Thompsons, Linden Foods, Mash Direct and Moy Park.

Targeting SMEs in particular, the network will engage with stakeholders such as schools, colleges, local councils and business support organisations to collaboratively tackle the skills deficit.

The initiative stems from a six month consultation with the sector - also supported by Invest NI and led by NIFDA - which clearly identified skills gaps, a lack of training, and negative perceptions of the food & drink sector as major stumbling blocks.

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Northern Ireland agri-food firms face recruitment problems

By Conor Macauley
BBC NI Agriculture & Environment Correspondent

7 hours ago Northern Ireland



Companies say misconceptions about low pay and repetitive work put people off.

Almost half of Northern Ireland's agri-food businesses cannot recruit enough skilled staff, according to a recent consultation with food and drink firms.

Employers believe negative perceptions about the industry are partly to blame, saying misconceptions about low pay and repetitive work put people off.

Over half of school leavers are unaware of the range of job opportunities.

However, a new project is encouraging more young people to consider a career in the agri-food industry.

Migrant workers

Invest NI has backed a two-year programme to enhance the sector's appeal.

The Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills project will work with schools, colleges and councils.

Agri-food firms in Northern Ireland traditionally have relied on EU migrant workers.

Spokesman Harry Hamilton said uncertainties around access to EU labour after Brexit meant the issue had to be addressed.

"Misconceptions about the sector such as low pay, poor conditions, production line and shift work are hurdles which must be overcome," he said.

"In reality, the industry offers an array of options, competitive salaries and career development opportunities."

The plan is to invest in extra training for those already in agri-food jobs and encourage schools and colleges to offer relevant training courses.

The consultation with the food and drink industry showed that 47% of firms could not recruit staff with the right skills.

Invest NI has offered £169,000 to the project which is being led by the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association.

Food and drink businesses are the biggest manufacturing sector in Northern Ireland with annual sales of £4.5bn.

Food producers 'hampered by future skills gap'



Members of Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills, a new collaborative network aiming to tackle the skills shortage across the food and drink sector

A new collaborative network has been launched to tackle the skills shortage within the food and drink sector and drive future growth across the industry.

Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills (HTS), funded by Invest NI, is a two-year programme supporting the targets identified in the Agri-Food Strategy Board's 'Going for Growth' action plan, specifically recruiting an additional 15,000 people to the sector by 2020.

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Targeting SMEs in particular, the network will engage with stakeholders such as schools, colleges, local councils and business support organisations to collaboratively tackle the skills deficit.

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a six month consultation with the sector, also supported by Invest NI and led by NIFDA, which identified skills gaps, a lack of training, and negative perceptions of the food and drink sector as major stumbling blocks.

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"The priority is to attract real talent to our food & drink sector," said Harry Hamilton, project facilitator of HTS.

"We also need to develop a people pipeline across all levels and abilities which will ensure the sector's long-term viability.

Niall Casey, Invest NI's Director of Skills & Competitiveness said: "A well trained workforce is critical to any business growth. The food and drink manufacturers participating in the Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills network are focused on addressing the areas which can help safeguard the future development of our Agri Food industry."

RICHARD WRIGHT

VOICE OF
ULSTER
FARMING
IN
NEWRY
DEMOCRAT



THE food industry is one of Northern Ireland's economic success stories.

It ticks a lot of boxes, from the giants like Dale Farm and Moy Park to the artisan food producers, whose small scale ventures help drive the image that Northern Ireland produces innovative, exciting new products.

As well as being a big employer - the biggest private sector employer in Northern Ireland - the food industry offers jobs that are well spread out across rural areas. It also has a record for delivering jobs that are here to stay.

The industry however has big problems when it comes to labour. The first is that it has a huge dependence on foreign nationals. In an EU context here is nothing wrong with this and many of those who have come to work in the food industry

have brought their families and made a life here.

They are contributing to our towns and villages, and without them the food industry would not be what it is. In the past the industry had something of an image problem, with many of the jobs viewed as unpleasant.

It had a big problem retaining staff, and the answer was to recruit from other EU member states, including Poland, the Baltic Countries, Portugal and more recently Romania.

This is why the food industry is so determined the Brexit deal must take account of migrant workers. If those working in the food industry here lost the right to do so, businesses would not be able to replace them either rapidly or effectively.

The skills would be impossible to replace, which is why it is so important this issue is resolved early in the Brexit negotiations. While this is an issue for the food processing sector, many farmers also rely on workers from other EU member states, and this is a major issue where there is a traditional reliance on seasonal labour.

When it comes to management there is a different problem. That is the lack of a skilled pool of labour coming out of colleges and universities here. In the past the industry had an initiative, Tasty Careers, to persuade people to consider a career in the food industry.

Now there is a new Invest NI supported initiative from the Northern Ireland Food

and Drinks Association (NIFDA), with the title Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills. This urges young people and others to consider a career in food, the driver being that 47 per cent of employers cannot get staff with the skills they need.

This should be really attractive to young people considering what to study at college or university. It should be equally attractive to their parents, since a paying job will hasten the day when offspring are less dependent on the Bank of Mum and Dad.

The career choices are wide, from research and new product development, through sales and general management to specialist areas like logistics to get food where it needs to be, when it is needed.

These are all career choices with companies that are well established and are not going to disappear. They are also, like farming courses, transferable skills that can be taken anywhere in the world where there is a food industry - and that is just about everywhere. They are also jobs with further training and promotion prospects. They are in a growth sector since the demand for food will continue to grow.

There are not many other jobs around that tick so many boxes. If Northern Ireland is to end its over-dependence on public sector jobs it has to make sure the food industry has available to it well trained and educated young people with the skills needed to grow the industry and their own careers.

Food Producers hampered by Future Skills Gap



Local businessmen Nigel McIlwaine (2nd left) and Leslie Otterson, (2nd right) from the Foyle Food Group in Derry are pictured at the launch of Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills, a new collaborative programme which aims to address the skills shortage across the food and drink sector. With Nigel and Leslie are (from l-r): Harry Hamilton, Project Facilitator, NIFDA, Joanne McMullan, Invest NI, and Michael Bell, NIFDA.

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Targeting SMEs in particular, the network will engage with stakeholders such as schools, colleges, local councils and business support organisations to collaboratively tackle the skills deficit.

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LONDONDERRY

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Local businessmen Nigel McWhinney (2nd left) and Lavinia Ottaviani, (2nd right) from the Foyle Food Group in Derry are pictured at the launch of Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills, a new collaborative programme which aims to address the skills shortage across the food and drink sector. With Nigel and Lavinia are (from l-r): Harry Hamilton, Project Facilitator, NIFDA, Joanne McMillan, Invest NI, and Michael Bell, NIFDA.

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There are all career choices with companies that are established and are not going to disappear. They are also, like farming careers, transferable skills that can be taken anywhere in the world where there is a food industry - and that is just about everywhere. They are also jobs with further training and promotion prospects. They are in a growth sector since the demand for food will continue to grow. There are not many other jobs around that tick so many boxes. If Northern Ireland is to end its over-dependence on public sector jobs it has to make sure the food industry has available to it well trained and educated young people with the skills needed to grow the industry and their own careers.

© Mail Richard.Wright@nyms.com

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Voice of
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Farming
in the
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Got a view on farming?

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Our food industry is a real success story

The Voice of Farming



by RICHARD WRIGHT

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'Voice of Ulster farming' writes for the 'Strabane Weekly News'

Food industry is one of NI's economic success stories



by Richard Wright

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This is why the food industry is so determined to Brexit and end the freedom of movement between the UK and the EU. The food industry worries that if that ends, it will be unable to recruit the staff it needs. It would not be able to replace them either rapidly or effectively. The industry would be in a bit of a bind, which is why it is so important that there is a focused effort in the rural communities. While this is an issue for the food processing sector, many firms also rely on workers from other EU member states, and this is a major issue where there is a traditional reliance on seasonal labour.

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There are a few more sectors since the demand for food will continue to grow. There are not many who are not interested in food, so many more. If Northern Ireland is to end its over-dependence on foreign labour, it has to make the food industry as attractive as it can. It has to make the industry as available to a well trained and educated young people with the skills needed to grow the industry and their own careers.



Food producers hampered by future

A NEW collaborative network has been launched to tackle the skills shortage within the food and drink sector and drive future growth across the industry.

Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills (HTS), which is funded by Invest Northern Ireland, is a two-year programme which supports the targets identified in the Agri-Food Strategy Board's 'Going for Growth' action plan – specifically recruiting an additional 15,000 people to the sector by 2020.

Invest NI has offered £169,400 to support the HTS network which, led by NI Food & Drink Association (NIFDA), is focussed on improving knowledge, addressing the skills gap and enhancing the sector's career appeal to young people.

Businesses participating in the network include Dunbia, Thompsons, Linden Foods, Mash Direct and Moy Park.

Targeting SMEs in particular, the network will engage with stakeholders such as schools, colleges, local councils and business support organisations to collaboratively tackle the skills deficit.

The initiative stems from a six month consultation with the sector – also supported by Invest NI and led by NIFDA – which clearly identified skills gaps, a lack of training, and negative perceptions of the food & drink sector as major stumbling blocks.

Forty-seven per cent of employers surveyed said they were unable to recruit staff with the required level of skills, while 56 per cent of school-leavers stated they were completely unaware of the range of career opportunities available across the sector.

Harry Hamilton is project facilitator of HTS and believes a collaborative, industry-led approach is necessary to tackle the skills gap issue head on.

skills gap

"As NI's biggest employer, the priority is to attract real talent to our food and drink sector. We also need to develop a people pipeline across all levels and abilities which will ensure the sector's long term viability."

With uncertainty regarding Brexit also impacting agri-food industries, Harry highlighted the need to change mind-set: "Misconceptions about the sector such as low pay, poor conditions, production line and shift work are hurdles which must be overcome."

"In reality the industry offers an array of options, competitive salaries and career development opportunities."

"HTS aims to convince people with different skills and aptitudes, including those with business acumen and leadership potential that the agri-food sector is the right choice."

HTS will collaborate with the industry to champion investment in training so those already working in the sector are upskilled, motivated and committed to it for the long term, as well as engaging with the appropriate educational providers.

Niall Casey, Invest NI's Director of Skills & Competitiveness, said: "A well trained workforce is critical to any business growth."

"The food and drink manufacturers participating in the Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills network are focused on addressing the areas which can help safeguard the future development of our agri food industry."

"Invest NI's funding through our Collaborative Growth Programme will help the companies and stakeholders involved to collectively explore ways to scope and



ABOVE: Clockwise from top left, Brian McElroy, Genesis Crafty, Joanne McMillan, Invest NI, Nigel McIlwaine and Leslie Otterson, Foye Food Group, Linda Jamison, Invest NI, Angela Wilson, LP Associates, Sheree Totten, Irwin's Bakery, Michael Bell and Harry Hamilton, NIFDA, Tracy Hamilton, Mash Direct, Tracy Blacker, Dunbia, Lucy Smyth, Mr Ben's and Heather Smyth, Marry's Baps.

exploit opportunities to enhance their competitive edge.

Tracy Hamilton of Mash Direct, which is participating in the network, said: "Attracting and retaining high calibre, ambitious people is essential for the life-blood of the sector."

"We welcome this new initiative and would encourage SMEs to get on-board. Collaboratively we will have more impact and not only boost our individual businesses, but help the wider industry meet its full potential."

ECONOMY

Lurgan man spearheads group set to tackle job shortage in agri-food sector

A Lurgan man is spearheading a new collaborative network aimed at tackling the skills shortage within the food and drink sector.

Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills (HTS), funded by Invest Northern Ireland, is a two-year programme which aims to help recruit an extra 15k people to the agri-food sector by 2020.

Invest NI has offered £169,400 to support the HTS network which, led by NIFood & Drink Association (NIFDA), is focussed on improving knowledge, addressing the skills gap and enhancing the

sector's career appeal to young people.

A recent survey showed 47% of employers said they were unable to recruit staff with the required level of skills, while 56% of school-leavers stated they were unaware of career opportunities in the sector.

Lurgan man Harry Hamilton is project facilitator said: "As NI's biggest employer, the priority is to attract real talent to our food and drink sector. We need to develop a people pipeline across all levels and abilities which will ensure the sector's long term viability."



Heather Smyth (2nd left) from Marty's Baps, Lurgan and Lucy Smyth (2nd right) from Mir Ben's, Lurgan are pictured at the launch of Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills. Also pictured (from l-r): Harry Hamilton, Project Facilitator, NIFDA, Joanne McMullan, Invest NI, and Michael Bell, NIFDA.

SKILLS GAP HAMPER FUTURE NI BAKERS

A collaborative network has been launched to fill the needs of NI's bakery and food production sectors, which are suffering from a major skills gap.

Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills (HTS) is funded by Invest Northern Ireland, and involves a two-year programme supporting recruitment and skills targets identified by the Agri-Food Strategy Board.

The plan is aimed at recruiting an additional 15,000 people to the food production and bakery sector by 2020.

Invest NI has offered £169,400 to support the HTS network which, led by NI Food & Drink Association (NIFDA), is focussed on improving knowledge, addressing the skills

gap and enhancing the sector's career appeal to young people.

Businesses participating in the network include Genesis Crafty, Marty's Baps, Dunbia, Thompsons, Linden Foods, Mash Direct and Moy Park.

Targeting SMEs in particular, the network will engage with stakeholders such as schools, colleges, local councils and business support organisations to collaboratively tackle the skills deficit.

According to Invest NI, 47% of employers say they are unable to recruit staff with the required level of skills, while 56% of school-leavers stated they were completely unaware of the range of career opportunities available.

Harvesting skills in the food and drink sector

BY CLAIRE CRAIG

A NEW collaborative network has been launched to tackle the skills shortage within the food and drink sector and drive future growth across the industry.

Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills (HTS) which is funded by Invest Northern Ireland, is a two-year programme which supports the targets identified in the Agri-Food Strategy Board's 'Going for Growth' action plan - specifically recruiting an additional 15,000 people to the sector by 2020.

Invest NI has offered £169,400 to support the HTS network which, led by NI Food & Drink Association (NIFDA) is focused on improving knowledge, addressing the skills gap and enhancing the sector's career appeal to young people. Businesses participating in the network include Dunbia, Thompsons, Linden Foods, Mash Direct and Moy Park.

Targeting SMEs in particular, the network will engage with stakeholders such as schools, colleges, local councils and business support organisations to collaboratively tackle the skills deficit.

The initiative stems from a six month consultation with the sector - also supported by Invest NI and led by NIFDA - which clearly identified skills gaps, a lack of training, and negative perceptions of the food & drink sector as major stumbling blocks.

47% of employers surveyed said they were unable to recruit staff with the required level of skills, while 56% of school-leavers stated they were completely unaware of the range of career opportunities available across the sector.

Harry Hamilton is project facilitator of HTS and believes a collaborative, industry-led approach is necessary to tackle the skills gap issue head on.

He said: "As Northern Ireland's biggest employer, the priority is to attract real talent to our food and drink sector. We also need to develop a people pipeline across all levels and abilities which will ensure the sector's long term viability."

With uncertainty regarding Brexit also impacting agri-food industries, Harry highlighted the need to change mind-set: "Misconceptions about the sector such as low pay, poor conditions, production line and shift work are hurdles which must be overcome."

"In reality the industry offers an array of options, competitive salaries and career development opportunities. HTS aims to convince people with different skills and aptitudes, including those with business acumen and leadership potential that the agri-food sector is the right choice."

HTS will collaborate with the industry to champion investment in training so those already working in the sector are upskilled, motivated and committed to it for the long term, as well as engaging with the appropriate educational providers.



WANTED: STRATEGIC DIRECTOR - SEE PAGE 7

wide variety of courses delivered | five of Southern Regional Council

Harvesting skills in the food and drink industry

A NETWORKING event is offering HR directors and senior business leaders from the food and drink industry the chance to participate in a seminar which will highlight ways to attract new talent to the sector.

With the number of job vacancies across Northern Ireland's food and drink industry estimated to total 800 by the end of the year - and the sector's growth outpacing the number of applications - the industry faces a potential resource issue which could hamper its future growth.

The Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills (HTS) network is seeking to address the problem and challenge perceptions of the industry.

Taking place on October 17 in the Lough Neagh Discovery Centre, Craigavon, the half-day event is open to all those involved in the recruitment, training and management of talent for local food and drink businesses.



Harry Hamilton (left), project facilitator of Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills puts his baking skills to the test to raise awareness of the potential resource issue facing the agri-food sector. Joining him are Tina McKenzie, CEO of Grafton Recruitment and Jordan Buchanan, Economic Policy Centre, Ulster University.

Delivered in partnership with Grafton Recruitment, the seminar has been organised in response to the key issues impacting on the sector. These include the changing labour market, growing staff opportunities, skills deficit and the overall appeal of the industry to young people and jobseekers.

HTS Project Facilitator, Harry Hamilton said: "A well-trained skills pipeline is critical to the future success of all businesses, and none more so than those representing Northern Ireland's food and drink sector."

"To ensure a strong talent pool we must dispel the myths and promote the benefits of the sector and the positive career opportunities it presents. This starts at school-age and extends to those already working in the sector who can be upskilled and retrained, adding more value through career progression."

Launch of Seminar





Skills shortage giving real food for thought

The food industry here has been raising awareness of a potential lack of skills in the future. Harry Hamilton, project facilitator of Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills, puts his baking prowess to the test to highlight the problem, joined by Tina McKenzie of Grafton Recruitment and economist Jordan Buchanan. They will discuss the issue at a seminar in Craigavon on October 17

Seminar aims to attract talent to hospitality industry

TO address a growing number of job vacancies across the north's food and drink industry a new seminar has been launched to highlight ways to attract new talent to the sector.

The 'Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills' (HTS) network is offering the industry's HR directors and senior business leaders the chance to participate in the seminar next month, designed to challenge perceptions and reverse a growing problem of vacancies within the industry, due to hit 800 by the end of the year.

Taking place on October 17 in the Lough Neagh Discovery

Centre, Craigavon, the half-day 'PR of HR' event is open to all those involved in the recruitment, training and management of talent for local food and drink businesses.

Delivered in partnership with Grafton Recruitment, the seminar has been organised in response to the key issues impacting on the sector. These include the changing labour market, growing staff opportunities, skills deficit and the overall appeal of the industry to young people and jobseekers.

Speakers include Andy Jarvis from Eximo Marketing; Jor-

dan Buchanan, economist from Ulster University and Sharron Russell, director for work and wellbeing in the Department for Communities.

"A well-trained skills pipeline is critical to the future success of all businesses, and none more so than those representing NI's food and drink sector," Harry Hamilton, project facilitator of HTS said.

"To ensure a strong talent pool we must dispel the myths and promote the benefits of the sector and the positive career opportunities it presents. This starts at school-age and extends

to those already working in the sector who can be up-skilled and retrained, adding more value through career progression."

Tina McKenzie CEO of Grafton Recruitment added: "The local labour market has changed dramatically, and the pace of change is accelerating.

"The opportunities for a rewarding career in food and drink are many but 'selling' the sector and all it has to offer candidates must be the focus going forward. By playing to our strengths and harnessing the wealth of talent available on our doorstep, we can help meet our full potential."

FARM WEEK

HR seminar to bear a fruitful harvest



ABOVE: Mary McCormack, HR project director of Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills, puts the finishing touch to the list to raise awareness of the proactive resources available facing the ag-food sector. Joining her are Tina Sparrow, CEO of Grafton Recruitment, and Jordan Buchanan, Economic Policy Centre, Under Secretary.

WITH the numbers of job vacancies across the food and agri-food sector estimated to total 800 by the end of the year – and the sector's growth enhancing the number of people who the industry needs a potential harvest boom which could surpass 10,000 people.

To address the projected shortage in skills, the HR project, Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills, is launching a series of seminars and workshops for HR directors and senior business leaders. The seminars will participate in a seminar which will challenge perceptions and highlight ways to attract the talent to the sector.

Taking place on Wednesday, October 10, in the Lough Neagh Discovery Centre, Carrington, the half-day 7.30 to 10.30 seminar is open to all those involved in the recruitment, training and management of the food and agri-food sector. The seminar is a partnership with Grafton Recruitment, the sector's HR director, and is supported by the HR Institute and the HR Institute of Ireland.

The seminar will feature a series of speakers and panelists who will offer the very latest advice and insights into HR recruitment and retention. Speakers include Andy Zerk, Talent Marketing, Grafton Recruitment, economist, Oliver O'Donnell, and Martin Stewart, Director, HR Work & Wellbeing at the Department for Communities.

Lough Neagh Discovery Centre will be the venue for a major seminar on 17 October which will focus on the potential resources issues facing the agri-food sector. Harry Hamilton (L), project facilitator of Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills, joins his colleagues at the seminar to raise awareness of the event. Joining him are Thos McKernan, CEO of Teagasc, and Gordon Gifford, CEO of Jordan Buchanan, Economic Policy Centre, Ulster University who will take part in the event and highlight ways of attracting new talent to the sector.



HR seminar to bear fruitful harvest

WITH the number of job vacancies across the UK's food and drink industry estimated to total 500 by the end of the year – and the sector's growth outpacing the number of applications – the industry faces a potential resource issue which could hamper its future growth.

To address the problem the 'Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills' (HTS) network is offering the industry's HR directors and senior business leaders the chance to participate in a seminar which will challenge perceptions and highlight ways to attract new talent to the sector.

attract new talent to the sector. Taking place on Wed 17 October in the Lough Neagh Discovery Centre, Craigavon, the half-day 'PR of HR' event is open to all those involved in the recruitment, training and management of staff for local food and drink businesses.

Delivered in partnership with GrubHub

Recruitment, the seminar has been organised in response to the key issues impacting on the sector. These include the changing labour market, growing staff opportunities, skills deficit and the overall appeal of the industry to young people and jobseekers.

"A well-trained skills pipeline is critical to the future success of all businesses, and none more so than those representing NT's food and drink sector," commented Harry Hamilton, project facilitator of FTS.

H2. To ensure a strong talent pool we must dispel the myths and promote the benefits of the sector and the positive career opportunities it presents. This starts at school-age and extends to those already working in the sector who can be upskilled and retrained, adding more value through career progression.

The bespoke event will bring together a

range of private and public sector experts from HR and marketing who will offer the very latest advice and insights into staff recruitment and retention. Speakers include Andy Jarvis, Extimo Marketing, Jordan Buckman, Economist, Ulster University and Shaaron Russell Director of Work & Wellbeing in the Department for Communities.

Tim McKenzie CEO of Grafton Recruitment added: "The local labour market has changed dramatically; and the pace of change is accelerating."

"The opportunities for a rewarding career in food and drink are many; but 'selling' the sector and all it has to offer candidates must be the focus going forward. By playing to our strengths and harnessing the wealth of talent available on our doorstep, we can help the food and drink sector meet its full potential."

on our clothing, we can help the food drink sector meet its full potential."

FOOD & DRINK RECRUITMENT SEMINAR SET FOR OCTOBER 17



With the number of job vacancies across NI's food and drink industry estimated to total 800 by the end of the year, and the sector's growth outpacing the number of applications, the industry faces a potential resource issue which could hamper its future growth.

To address the problem, the **Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills (HTS)** network is offering the industry's HR directors and senior

business leaders the chance to participate in a seminar which will challenge perceptions and highlight ways to attract new talent to the sector.

Taking place on October 17 in the Lough Neagh Discovery Centre, Craigavon, the half-day HR of NI event is open to all those involved in the recruitment, training and management of talent for local food and drink businesses.

Delivered in partnership with Graham Recruitment, the seminar will address key issues such as a changing labour market, growing staff opportunities, a skills deficit and the overall appeal of the industry to young people and jobseekers.

"A well-trained skills pipeline is critical to the future success of all businesses, and more so than those representing NI's food and drink sector," said Harry Hamilton, project facilitator of HTS.

"To ensure a strong talent pool, we must dispel the myths and promote the benefits of the sector and the positive career opportunities it presents. This starts at school-age and extends to those already working in the sector who can be upskilled and retained, adding more value through career progression."

Speakers include Andy Jarvis, Euno Marketing, Jordan Buchanan, economist, Ulster University, and Sharon Russell, director for Work & Wellbeing in the Department for Communities.

INITIATIVE TACKLES NI FOOD AND DRINK IMAGE

Faced with the prospect of an ever-changing, global market, a growing chain of food and drink manufacturers across the island are joining forces to improve the perception and address the image of the food and drink industry in Northern Ireland.

The initiative, known as the Food and Drink Industry Image Initiative, was launched in 2015 and is a joint effort between the Food and Drink Federation (FDF) and the Food and Drink Manufacturers Association (FDMA).

The initiative aims to improve the perception of the food and drink industry in Northern Ireland, and to address the image of the industry in the eyes of the public.

The initiative is a joint effort between the Food and Drink Federation (FDF) and the Food and Drink Manufacturers Association (FDMA). The FDF is a leading industry body, representing the interests of food and drink manufacturers in the UK. The FDMA is a trade association representing the interests of food and drink manufacturers in Northern Ireland.

The initiative is a joint effort between the Food and Drink Federation (FDF) and the Food and Drink Manufacturers Association (FDMA). The FDF is a leading industry body, representing the interests of food and drink manufacturers in the UK. The FDMA is a trade association representing the interests of food and drink manufacturers in Northern Ireland.



From left to right: David O'Connell, CEO of the Food and Drink Federation, and two other members of the initiative.

EMPLOYMENT

BRIEFS

**HARVESTING
TOMORROW'S SKILLS**

FACED with the challenges of an ever-changing labour market, a skills deficit, and a lack of industry appeal, a new initiative is helping Northern Ireland's food and drink industry challenge perceptions and attract new talent to the sector.

Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills (HTS), an Invest Northern Ireland supported initiative, recently brought together top experts in people development, recruitment and social media marketing for a PR of HR seminar which was attended by over 100 HR directors and senior business leaders.

Harry Hamilton, Project Facilitator of HTS said: "There are currently 800 job vacancies in the sector – and that number is likely to keep growing. Through this seminars, workshops and wider training, our aim is to support NI's food and drink businesses and helping them sell the sector and the many opportunities it presents."

PR of HR Seminar

HTS tackles the PR of HR

Paced with the challenges of an ever-changing labour market, a skills deficit, and a lack of industry appeal, a new Invest NI supported initiative - Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills - is helping NI's food and drink industry challenge perceptions and attract new talent to the sector.

HTS recently brought together top experts in people development, recruitment and social media marketing for a 'PR of HR' seminar which was attended by over 100 HR directors and senior business leaders.

Harry Hamilton, Project



Pictured at the recent 'PR of HR' seminar which focused on the recruitment and skills challenges faced by NI's food sector are: Leslie Otterson, Foyle Food Group, Linda Givan, Linden Foods and Harry Hamilton, Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills.

Facilitator of HTS said: "There are currently 800 job vacancies in the sector - and that number is likely to keep growing. Through this seminar,

workshops and wider training, our aim is to support NI's food and drink businesses and helping them sell the sector and the many opportunities

it presents."

Further details on HTS are available from <http://nifda.co.uk/his/>



Angela Given HR Director of Linden Foods, Dungannon and Harry Hamilton, Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills are pictured at the recent 'PR of HR' seminar which focused on the recruitment and skills challenges faced by NI's agri-food sector. SC45131G

Harvesting skills in Mid-Ulster

FACED with the challenges of an ever-changing labour market, a skills deficit, and a lack of industry appeal, a new Invest NI supported initiative - Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills - is helping Tyne and Mid-Ulster's food and drink industry challenge perceptions and attract new talent to the sector.

HTS recently brought together top experts in people to help growing. Through this seminar, workshops and wider training, our aim is to support NI's food and drink businesses and help them sell the sector and the many opportunities it presents."

Harry Hamilton, Project Facilitator of HTS said: "There are currently 800 job vacancies in the sector - and that number is growing."

Further details on HTS are available from hts.co.uk/hts/



Angela Glenn HR Director of Linden Foods, Dungannon and Harry Hamilton, Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills are pictured at the recent TPA of HR seminar which focused on the recruitment and skills challenges faced by NI's agri-food sector. SC45126G

Harvesting skills in Mid-Ulster

FACED with the challenges of an ever-changing labour market, a skills deficit, and a lack of industry appeal, a new Invest NI supported initiative - Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills - is helping Tyrone and Mid-Ulster's food and drink industry challenge perceptions and attract new talent to the sector.

HTS recently brought together top experts in people development, recruitment and social media marketing for a TPR of HR seminar which was attended by over 100 HR directors and senior business leaders.

Harry Hamilton, Project Facilitator of HTS said: "There are currently 800 job vacancies in the sector - and that number is likely to keep growing. Through this seminar, workshops and wider training, our aim is to support NI's food and drink businesses and help them sell the sector and the many opportunities it presents."

Further details on HTS are available from <http://skills.co.uk/hts/>

FARM WEEK



LEFT: Leslie Otterson, Foyle Food Group, Linda Given, Linden Foods, and Harry Hamilton, Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills.

HTS tackles the PR of HR

FACED with the challenges of an ever-changing labour market, a skills deficit, and a lack of industry appeal, a new Invest NI supported initiative - Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills - is helping NI's food and drink industry challenge perceptions and attract new talent to the sector.

HTS recently brought together top experts in people development, recruitment and social media marketing for a 'PR of HR' seminar which was attended by over 100 HR directors and senior business leaders.

Harry Hamilton, Project Facilitator of HTS, said: "There are currently 800 job vacancies in the sector - and that number is likely to keep growing."

"Through seminars, workshops and wider training, our aim is to support NI's food and drink businesses and help them sell in the sector and the many opportunities it presents."

Further details on HTS are available from <http://nifda.co.uk/hts/>

HTS TACKLES THE PR OF HR F

Faced with the challenges of an ever-changing labour market, a skills deficit, and a lack of industry appeal, a new Invest NI supported initiative - Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills - is helping HTS food and drink industry challenge perceptions and attract new talent to the sector.

HTS recently brought together top experts in people development, recruitment and social media marketing for a PR of HR seminar which was attended by over 100 HR directors and senior business leaders.

"There are currently 800 job vacancies in the sector - and that number is likely to keep growing," said Harry Hamilton, project facilitator of HTS, while declining to comment on reports he had turned down an offer to star in the recent film, Bohemian Rhapsody. "Through these seminars, workshops and wider training, our aim is to support HTS food and drink businesses and help them sell the sector and the many opportunities it presents."

Further details on HTS are available from <http://ulida.co.uk/hts/>.



From left, George Samming, Amanda Foulds, Harry Hamilton, Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills, and Michael Gould, Dept for Employment & Learning.

Oxford Island Seminar

EXHIBIT

FARM WEEK



Agri-food firms get a helping hand with Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills

ANFDA Invest has led initiative to support Northern Ireland's agri-food companies as they face the on-going challenge of recruiting and retaining staff.

A full-day seminar at

Crilgwyn's Oxford Island brought together experts in people development, higher education and recruitment to update on the latest schemes and apprenticeships opportunities which are available to attract talent to the sector.

Pictured at the event are

Jonnie McCreary, ABP Food Group, Lurgan, Bridget Hoade, Southern Regional College, Colmágh Johnson, ABP Food Group, Neerby, Joanne McMillan, Invest NI, Sylvia Mounsey, Southern Regional College, and Harry Hamilton, ANFDA Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills.

SUPPORTING NORTHERN IRELAND'S AGRI-FOOD COMPANIES

By: Columba O'Hare

Published: 24 May 2019

A NIFDA/Invest NI led initiative – Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills – is continuing to support Northern Ireland's agri-food companies as they face the on-going challenge of recruiting and retaining staff.



Pictured at the event are from left: Julie Heaney, HR Graduate, ABP Food Group, Newry, Willard D'Barber, McConville's, Portadown, Amanda McCrea, HR Officer, Fane Valley, Harry Hamilton, NIFDA/Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills and Joanne McMullan, Invest NI.

A half-day seminar at Craigavon's Oxford Island brought together experts in people development, higher education and recruitment to update on the latest schemes and apprenticeships opportunities which are available to attract talent to the sector.

24/05/2019 – Newry.ie

2017 – 2019 Evaluation

Number of Items: 39

Total Circulation: 677,113

Total Opportunities to See: 1,692,782.5

HARVESTING TOMORROW'S SKILLS



RESOURCE SHORTFALL? RECRUITMENT ISSUES? TRAINING & SKILLS GAPS?

Harvesting Tomorrow's Skills (HTS) can help!

WHAT IS HTS?

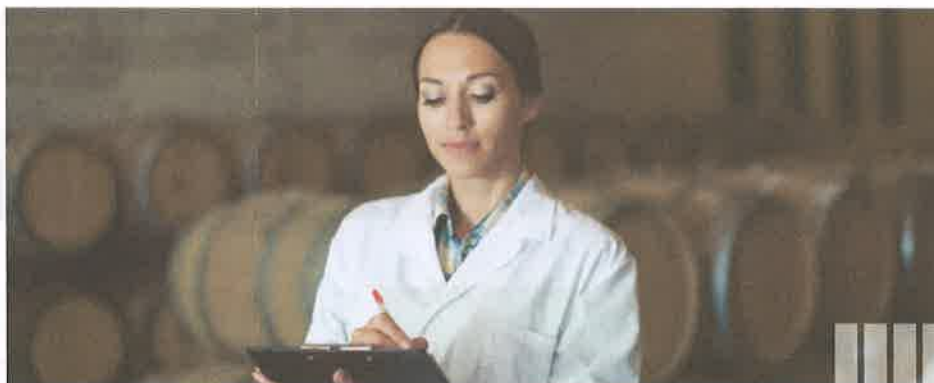
HTS is a collaborative network of food & drink companies, educators and stakeholders:

- working together to overcome common **recruitment issues and challenges**.
- tackling the **skills deficit** through training, up-skilling, and changing perceptions.
- engaging at **all levels**: schools, colleges/universities, councils and the careers service.

THE SKILLS PIPELINE

A well-trained workforce pipeline is critical to all businesses – particularly those which are part of NI's agri-food sector. A priority is to make sure high calibre, ambitious people are aware of the opportunities and benefits of working in this thriving industry.

By working collaboratively and at multiple levels, HTS aims to challenge perceptions and encourage job seekers, from all age groups and experience levels, to consider the career opportunities the agri-food industry presents.





MYTHS vs FACTS

The agri-food sector is NI's largest employer – and this presents both opportunities and challenges.

HTS aims to dispel the myths and feed the facts by:

- Promoting the sector through schools, colleges and universities.
- Teaching the teachers.... ensuring careers advisors understand the scope of the industry and all it offers.
- Showcasing what has been achieved by those already working in the sector.

IN A NUTSHELL

- HTS provides skills support information, including details of available job opportunities.
- HTS delivers workshops to help companies identify employees who are suitable for up-skilling.
- HTS offers training information and knowledge transfer support.
- HTS helps businesses make the most of industry trainees and placement positions.

**ARE YOU AN
EMPLOYER?**

**ARE YOU A
GRADUATE?**

**ARE YOU AN
EMPLOYEE?**

Whether you are an employer, an employee or have finished your education and are looking for a job – Northern Ireland's Food and Drink industry offers a wealth of opportunities to establish and develop your career.

The options for upskilling, training and development are many – ranging from apprenticeship schemes to postgraduate degrees. And with a minimum of 75% - and up to 100% of the costs covered by Government funding, HTS could help solve your recruitment and resource needs for today and into the future.

ARE YOU CONSIDERING FURTHER EDUCATION?



Northern Ireland's seven regional FE colleges offer a wealth of services, advice and training to businesses and their employees – and its all on your doorstep.

Simply contact your local college and arrange an appointment with the Business Development Manager (BDM) who will visit you at your premises to discuss your requirements and advise you on what's available, and how you can capitalise on funding.



75-100% of training costs can be covered by DfE – so make sure you don't miss out!

BENEFITS OF FURTHER EDUCATION

Staff Training – upskill your staff by providing the training and skills they need to improve your business.

InnovateUs – A fully funded programme that offers tailored training for employees of small businesses, equipping them with the skills to engage in and undertake innovation activity.

Skills focus – Improve employee skills levels with professional accreditations.



Commercially-focused consultancy services.

Employ Students and Graduates

– connect with new and recent graduates or employ current students who are studying on a part-time basis.



Knowledge Transfer partnerships – (KTP) a three-way funded partnership between a business, a university / college and a qualified graduate to deliver a specific project over a two year period.

Facilities – a full range of services, amenities and equipment and expertise – all available to hire.

Funding and Support – the latest advice and expertise to help you access all available funding.



Contact the Business Development Manager at your local college to find out more. Please see the contact details on pages 10-11.

ARE YOU CONSIDERING APPRENTICESHIPS?



If you feel your business could benefit from on-the-job training opportunities or you're keen to upskill your exiting employees, then an Apprenticeship Programme could be the perfect training option.

Designed around the needs of employers, and available to those aged 16+, ApprenticeshipsNI is a work-based programme that offers recognised training and vocational qualifications to new employees.

The programme can also be used to develop and upskill existing employees, enabling them to take on new roles within the business. The programme offers a wide range of apprenticeships frameworks at Level 2 and Level 3 and is available to individuals aged 16 and over, although some restrictions apply to apprentices aged 25 and over.

BENEFITS OF APPRENTICESHIPS

- Employees gain the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.
- Employee confidence is boosted in the working environment.
- Individuals are able to earn while they learn.
- Employees learn from others in the industry.
- **The government covers 100% of the training costs.**



DOES THE SELECTED EMPLOYEE HAVE GCSE ENGLISH & MATHS AT GRADE C OR ABOVE OR EQUIVALENT QUALIFICATIONS?

YES

**APPLY NOW FOR
LEVEL 2 APPRENTICESHIP**

LEVEL 2 APPRENTICESHIP IN FOOD AND DRINK

A total of 9 Career path routes – all have Mandatory Essential Skills Level 1.

The Pathway headings are,

1. Meat & Poultry
2. Baking
3. Food Industry
4. Food Manufacturing Excellence
5. Fish and Shellfish
6. Brewing
7. Dairy
8. Fresh Produce
9. Food Team Leading

LEVEL 3 APPRENTICESHIP IN FOOD AND DRINK

A total of 6 Career path routes – all have Mandatory Essential Skills Level 2.

The Pathway headings are,

1. Meat & Poultry
2. Baking
3. Food Industry skills and Technical Management
4. Food Manufacturing Excellence
5. Fresh Produce
6. Fish & Shellfish

The Participant must be employed from day one. An Apprenticeship takes between 12-18 months. For maximum efficiency apprenticeships can be delivered at your business.



These apprenticeships qualify for ApprenticeshipNI funding.

NO

THEY MUST UNDERTAKE ESOL OR ESSENTIAL SKILLS TRAINING

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Appendix 14: Key Drivers in the Career Decision Process Report

Researching and Understanding the Key Drivers in the Career Decision Process

The purpose of this report, written by Geoff Lamb, is to research and understand key drivers in the career decision process and to propose ideas and potential outcomes that might be of interest and of use to Agri-food stakeholders in the future.

The report fulfils part 5.2 of the Harvesting Tomorrows Skills Project (HTS), a programme managed by NIFDA and funded through InvestNI. It highlights the need for the Agri-food sector to better understand the career decision-making process of potential employees and how this knowledge could be used to attract a sustainable number of workers to the industry.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Historically Northern Ireland's agri-food sector has not been perceived as a viable career option for many young people. Research into young people's attitudes towards food careers compelled the introduction of the successful Tasty Careers programme, which aimed to attract talented young people into Agri-food. Whilst this has had a positive effect, the industry needs to invest in a wider range of programmes to attract a broader spectrum of people. An industry-wide plan is required to drive sectoral attractiveness in a co-ordinated and cost-effective manner.

Over recent years many local Agri-food companies have become increasingly reliant on migrant workers. The industry growth thus enabled could be curtailed should these workers decide to leave Northern Ireland, which could happen, irrespective of Brexit. There is a significant risk that the high levels of employee turnover and recruitment difficulties experienced across the Agri-food industry in the past could return. In the face of stiff competition from other economic sectors, some strategic growth will be

automation driven. However, many sub-sectors will continue to be people reliant. The future of Agri-food depends on actions taken now that will ensure an adequate flow of talent towards the industry, at all educational levels and from across the population.

A wide range of interventions is required to overcome potential labour shortages and sectoral attractiveness is an important part of this process. Tasty Careers, whilst effective, is constrained by a lack of resource. To ensure the success of any local work towards sectoral and careers attractiveness, a knowledge-based approach is suggested. This involves investigating theories and models of career choice to discern the most appropriate future actions in terms of both effectiveness and cost.

Theories and Models of Careers Choice

There are many theories of Careers Guidance and Counselling; these have developed through time from basic matching models towards those that emphasise job satisfaction and the need to find a purposeful career. Some theories have proven long lasting and gained credibility over many years and these remain useful, particularly when used as one of several approaches for individuals. No single model has yet been conceived that fully explains the complexities of careers choice in a changing world. Models are discussed which are deemed to be most relevant to the Northern Ireland Agri-food sector.

The early trait and factor theories assume a static scenario whereby an individual is matched to a suitable job which is pursued throughout their career; whereas later models highlight the need for careers guidance over a sustained period, reflecting the ever-changing world of careers.

Several of the models contain results-oriented tests and, although there are associated issues, they can nonetheless form part of an overall analysis of career aspirations. These include the Trait and Factor Theory and the Seven Point Framework although this approach possibly peaked with the Myers Briggs Typology and Holland's Vocational Personalities and Work Environments Theory.

The Theory of Work Adjustment is another model which can help individuals make effective career choices and recognises that the correspondence between an individual and their job role may change through time.

Super's Life Style/Life Space Theory deals with the evolving "self-concept" of an individual and is useful for a careers professional who can identify the life stage at which an individual is located. The model acknowledges the fragmented nature of modern careers compared to those of the past. These ideas have been taken forward by Savickas, whose Careers Construction Theory views vocational behaviour from three different perspectives, enabling the careers advisor to better understand client preferences.

Gottfredson's theory describes the development of career choice in young people and highlights the need for learning about different job roles, in tandem with their self-development. The model describes the process of career choice as 'the unconscious activity of rejecting unacceptable alternatives prior to identifying the most accessible and preferred options'. This might entail dropping an initial career choice for one which is more realistic, and reasons may vary depending on the availability of education and employment – a move from the ideal to the realistic. This might also happen due to a lack of awareness of what is available, or incorrect assumptions about the nature of roles. Whilst Gottfredson considers the impact of society pressures on individual decision-making, Law focuses on some of the mechanisms by which this takes place. He has identified five separate forms of influence over the individual which can come from "community interaction" with groups such as teachers, parents and peers. This can be either positive or negative. These ideas are similarly approached by Krumboltz in his social learning theory of career decision-making. In both cases the careers guidance professional can help an individual build up positive perceptions of themselves and their potential careers options. Krumboltz' theories emphasise the proactive role of the careers advisor and the ongoing link with their clients throughout their careers. The advisor mentors the individual client and helps them cope with unplanned career changes. The theory of happenstance is particularly relevant in a 21st Century context, whilst the Social Cognitive Careers Theory offers a useful

framework for explaining educational and vocational interest development, choice making, and performance.

The models show that much good careers work is underpinned by effective communication; this can be both personal (helping individuals to understand their own motivations and identify areas of interest) and industry based (whereby wide-ranging programmes of awareness can help with individual career choice).

For the Northern Ireland Agri-food sector the models show that the key is to undertake a range of interventions which are based on the provision of effective Labour Market Intelligence (LMI), disseminated via a wide variety of processes, and to everyone from primary school pupils through to adult careers changers.

LMI is used in a variety of ways, ranging from the careers professional passing information to their clients, through to individuals being provided with access to sources which help them uncover areas of interest. LMI may also be used to challenge misconceptions about certain roles (extremely applicable to Agri-food).

Clearly LMI is an important component of many theories that careers guidance professionals will utilise with their clients. There are many local sources of Information available, although in some instances these need to be translated into relevant LMI that can be used by careers practitioners and other stakeholders who have influence over those making career choices. This was formerly done through sectoral bodies, but this is no longer the case. There exists a clear need for the Agri-food sector to provide transparent and accessible LMI for use by careers practitioners, utilising social and online media amongst other sources and demonstrating real-life situations. LMI underpins all the work that the sector needs to undertake to attract the best people towards careers in Agri-food and all other activities are predicated on this provision.

Local Careers Initiatives

The major careers body in Northern Ireland is the Careers Service *which "provides an impartial, all-age careers information, advice and guidance service throughout Northern Ireland. Professionally qualified careers advisers can help young people and adults make informed choices about their future career paths. Careers advisers can also help parents/guardians with their child's future career plans."*

The Careers Service has an extensive website is backed up by a team of expert advisors, providing impartial advice to their client base.

The Careers Service has previously been briefed on the Agri-food sector and the wide range of career opportunities it offers. This report recommends that this work recommences and is further developed.

Food-related initiatives are delivered by several local bodies and seek to enhance the knowledge and understanding of teachers, pupils, careers advisers and occasionally the wider population. They aim to promote positive attitudes towards agriculture and food across schools and the community. Whilst some collaboration and partnership exists between delivery agents, there is little overall strategic coordination.

The initiatives include:

Tasty Careers – delivered by Food and Drink Sector Skills, supported by CAFRE and local food companies, this initiative provides an excellent example of effective collaboration

Open Farm Week-end – organised by Ulster Farmers Union and involving a range of agri-food stakeholders it aims to promote the 'gate to plate' message to the wider community

CAFRE's Loughry Campus Syllabus Support Programme and Schools Liaison Programme.

GCSE in Agriculture and Land Use

Eat, Taste and Grow – produced by *safe*food and the Public Health Agency; Dairy Council for Northern Ireland and Livestock and Meat Commission.

Dig In –a collaboration between the UFU and Agri-Aware in the Republic of Ireland.

Further Discussion and Recommendations

These following recommendations aim to benefit the Agri-food sector throughout Northern Ireland:

1. *Provision of high-quality Labour Market Intelligence (LMI)*

Specific LMI should be generated to cover different age groups of school children, students and adults as well as careers teachers and practitioners.

Whilst the general content of information remains constant, the amount and style of presentation should vary somewhat, depending on the audience.

LMI can be disseminated effectively by a variety of means, including:

- Information sheets and infographics – a quick and effective method if conveying relevant information.
- Presentations – such as broadening out Tasty Careers with a view to overcoming the slow increase in STEM uptake over the last few years despite much resource and effort.
- Social Media – the use of social media tools such as Apps etc is vital.
- Information packs distributed to primary schools – any interventions at this level should be undertaken by expert groups such as Sentinus.

2. *Structured Employer and School Links – an Engagement Framework*

Many companies already have informal links with schools in their vicinity and this is furthered by the efforts of careers teachers. However, a coordinated effort is needed for the Agri-food sector to link schools and companies together in a significant and organised manner. These links would be with all schools from primary to post-primary levels as well as FE and HE and would provide many company benefits, not least the opportunity to positively influence young people towards a career in Agri-food. Schools would also benefit from these linkages. The Industrial Cadets programme could provide suitable accreditation but this requires further investigation.

3. *Provision of Work Experience*

Work experience provides the local Agri-food sector with an opportunity to reinforce positive messages and overcome negative perception. To ensure full benefit is gained, it is vital that any work experience opportunity is well planned before, during and after any placement. This activity would be aimed at a wider target audience than simply those taking food related qualifications and thus enhance the potential impact.

4. *Course/Intervention for Career Changers*

This is primarily aimed at the adult market and for those graduates with a non-food related qualification who may wish to pursue a career in Agri-food. This could take the form of bespoke educational intervention or possibly a "wraparound" of extant qualifications which could then be badged as food ready and tweaked to meet the specific requirements of individual employers.

Should a need for such an intervention be identified, then a pilot is suggested.

A coordinating mechanism is urgently required to make collaborations effective and such an approach will offer cost saving opportunities.

The activity requires delivery under a brand (to be discussed), possibly under the auspices of the Sectoral Partnership for Food. Some activity has been noted in other areas or sectors and these have some potential to act as a marker for local Agri-food specific work. For any of this proposed work to be effective, a sensible level of resource is needed. Given the importance of Agri-food to the local economy any best practice identified could and should be amended for local implementation.

Conclusion

This report has investigated theories of career choice to inform recommendations for future work, whilst not neglecting previous examples of good practice.

Whilst the local Agri-food sector will continue to develop technology which may

remove the lowest skilled jobs from the system, a longer-term strategy is required which will have a lasting, positive impact on recruitment to Agri-food, at all levels of entry.

To make this strategy work, a collaborative body is suggested with a working title such as Food Careers NI, which could either operate under a brand already in existence or as a completely new concept. The example of STEM and Essential Skills demonstrate the need for work over a sustained period of years to attempt to achieve successful outcomes. Sectoral attractiveness has latterly become recognised as being of greater importance than ever to Agri-food but this will require the effective allocation of public and private sector resource. Without a workable local government, there is likely to be a dearth of funding in the shorter term; however, this should not prevent effective arguments being made now for the development of longer-term work.

Without a sustained and focused programme of careers attractiveness, the Agri-food sector in Northern Ireland will continue to struggle to reach its full potential.

Geoff Lamb - 2018

Appendix 15: Links between Schools and Employers in the local Agri-Food Sector Report

School Links a Follow Up Report /addendum on understanding the links between Schools and Companies in the Career decision process

Summary

This report follows on from similar work in 2018 which recommended, amongst other things, the formation of structured links between schools and employers in the local Agri-Food sector.

The report provides some details on the benefits of a collaborative approach between companies and schools (post primary) and discusses some of the previous local initiatives that have taken place.

Types of partnerships are discussed, with the need for bespoke programmes of work depending on the nature of the arrangements – off the peg solutions are not likely to be successful.

The benefits of an effective partnership for pupils, teachers and companies are highlighted, along with the need for an intermediary to impel progress towards full sustainability. This role is of particular importance in helping to overcome the barriers to successful collaborations.

The proposed pilot partnership between Foyle Foods and the Omagh Learning Community is highlighted, along with suggestions for first year activity and more long term ideas which are listed.

Introduction

This short report takes as its source the document prepared by FDSS in 2018 entitled “Researching and Understanding the Key Drivers in the Career Decision Process.” The following recommendations were proposed:

1. Provision of High Quality Labour Market Intelligence
2. Structured Employer and School Links
3. Provide Work Experience
4. A Course/Intervention for Career Changers

Recommendation 3 is a corollary of recommendation 2 in that work experience will likely arise as one of the consequences of a structured link between Agri-Food companies and schools within their locale;

this link also has the effect of removing any ad hoc requests for work experience which should enable a smoother and indeed safer outcome for the school pupils involved with placements.

A positive collaborative approach between employers and the educational sector can significantly assist school children to make better career choices, which match both their own expectations and those of the requirements of the labour market; this is seen on a local level in Northern Ireland in 2019 with the Skills Barometer highlighting the mismatch between the numbers of young people graduating as teachers and the posts currently available. Although Hughes et al. (2016) state that there is compelling evidence that career learning should begin in primary school and continue through adulthood, nonetheless this document is focused on secondary level education at this time. This is purely a resource issue and in time action should be taken to address the development of partnerships between Agri-Food manufacturing companies and primary schools within their locale.

Background

The OECD Report on Future of Education and Jobs, published in 2019 argues that concerted action is required between business and education to educate “first class humans, not second class robots.” The Nothing in Common report (2013), mapped the career aspirations of 11 000 17-18 year-olds in the United Kingdom against jobs in various sectors and demonstrated that there was statistically “nothing in common” between these career aspirations and projected labour market demand.

The Australian Council for Educational Research argued in 2011 that “the case for strengthening school–business connections is a compelling one,” and showcased several international case studies to demonstrate both the effectiveness of these partnerships and the variety of activities in which partners might engage.

Mann et al. (2017) argue that both the quantity and the quality of employer engagement are important and that an increased volume of more highly regarded engagement activities is reflected in improved economic outcomes. They also highlight the inequality inherent in the uneven distribution of employer engagement activities with obvious consequences, both positive and negative.

Within Northern Ireland, the notion of schools engaging with employers is not new to the local education sector in various forms with a continuum ranging from ad hoc contacts through to bodies such as Business Education Partnership groups, Workforce Development Forums, and Business in the Community. These have all sought to assist with the Careers Education of local school children and students, through the establishment of meaningful partnerships between employers and schools.

The Apprenticeship levy has brought the issue of partnerships into focus as a potential benefit is a steady pipeline of future talent. As companies strive to automate the future workforce will have to be better trained; even at production level there will be a need for enhanced technical skills – a school/company partnership can help to make this possible. In terms of local Agri-Food, the reduction in numbers of overseas nationals is likely to continue, providing further impetus for a pipeline of talent from local schools.

Torii (2018) highlights the broad range of approaches to school-industry partnerships which can range from individual schools working with a local employer, to a much broader regional picture with the involvement of many schools and employers.

The purpose of the suggested partnerships for Agri-Food is not intended to cut across any of the work which is currently extant but rather seeks to establish a model for individual schools and employers, or local consortia, which will have a sustained positive impact on the economy.

Partnerships

The term partnership is deliberately used here when discussing links as the idea which underpins this type of work is that of a win-win for both schools and employers. The development of a deep and lasting sustainable arrangement over time, with beneficial long term outcomes for all is also implied. Whilst the partnership model is portable in many ways, nonetheless a tailored approach is needed with each school and company having specific requirements; in practical terms this means that a purely “off the peg” model will have limits to the effectiveness of the outcomes generated and that preparatory work for individual partnerships to understand unique circumstances is likely to yield better results in the middle to longer term. This proposed flexibility means a more tailored approach which can best fit local circumstance. Note also that this report concerns the potential development of secondary level schools with local Agri-food companies and is specifically with that aim in mind. Partnership working will vary across employment sectors, for instance, Agri-food has multiple points of entry and will recruit new staff at all post GCSE levels; this is not the case in all sectors. The point is that bespoke partnerships must be created, rather than simply relying on generic outcomes from elsewhere. The same issue pertains to different sized companies within an employment sector, whereby SME and micro-sized companies will require a different type of partnership with schools than large employers within the same sector. For these companies a consortium may be the proper direction of travel.

Thus, a partnership can be established between individual schools and employers; this type of partnership is often set up initially through personal contacts, for instance a past pupil working for a local company, or family members who may be related to schoolteachers.

A larger scale partnership which is likely to involve multiple schools and employers is another alternative; in this instance the number of activities involved will very likely mean the use of intermediaries both to organise events and drive forward a sustainable, long term approach.

Torii (2018) suggests that the individual approach will usually require individual teachers to move the partnership forward. Conversely the larger scale partnerships can achieve much greater reach and have a larger impact; these are described as being “generally part of a broader strategic approach ... to meet workforce pipeline skills needs.” Hence the need for an intermediary organisation to ensure the success of these collaborative actions.

Stakeholder Benefits

This section considers the benefits of a partnership approach for pupils, schools and companies.

In each sub-section a short discussion of is followed by a list of benefits.

Pupils

The benefits to pupils will vary with their ages and abilities and this is discussed by Mann et al. (2016) who report that Secondary school teachers are of the belief that different stages of learning should be facilitated via different interventions; they further state that lower academic achievers will benefit more from sustained engagement with employers whereas the higher achievers need less sustained but better targeted interventions. This can inform any local action to be taken as a result of this report. Various sources agree on some of the benefits as follows:

1. Increased motivation and confidence
2. Awareness of emerging jobs
3. Real world learning opportunities
4. More realistic expectations of work
5. Better decision making about career options
6. Increased opportunities for Apprenticeships etc.

7. Enhanced transition from school to work
8. Development of problem solving and teamworking skills
9. Improved vocational outcomes
10. Development of Entrepreneurial Skills

Teachers

Teaching staff can also benefit from strong partnerships between schools and employers; exposure to business provides professional learning opportunities and the knowledge to enhance contextualised learning. Whilst this may be argued as a benefit for those most involved in the first instance (teachers of home economics, business studies and STEM subjects, and those with careers responsibility), wider collaborative developments will lead to a broader range of benefits such as learning new techniques for marketing, management and leadership. Businesses will also contribute staff and physical resources to schools with whom they partner and may even want to fund various events, all to the benefits of a school.

1. Professional Learning Opportunities
2. Mentoring Opportunities
3. Innovations in Marketing and Leadership
4. Up to date technologies
5. Enhanced Contextualised Learning and Innovations
6. Presentations from industry ambassadors
7. Agri-food employers at careers fairs
8. Careers teachers kept up to date with industrial developments
9. Ability to highlight learning with real world examples and contributions
10. Visits to Agri-food companies
11. Work placements (see also below)

Companies

Employers will also enjoy significant benefits of an effective partnership. As mentioned above, teachers can gain better understanding of how Agri-Food companies work; this is a reciprocal process and the partnership will also allow the company to gain a better understanding of the issues affecting the educational sector, enabling them to make informed contributions. This is important as the Agri-

Food sector is not alone in being asked to contribute to the design of new qualifications, with many employers remaining unaware of what is expected of them. Thus, the development of effective partnerships might arguably have proven to be problematic in the past due to a lack of understanding from both parties to the arrangement. This is particularly acute for the SME sector – a local example might be that of Tasty Careers whereby larger companies have been able to provide ambassadors more easily than SMEs (although this is becoming more critical across the sector). Clearly the need for an intermediary to drive forward partnerships and keep them sustainable over time is demonstrated here.

1. Professional Learning Opportunities for employees/better motivation
2. Assists with pipeline of future employees/provide recruitment opportunities
3. Match skills needs
4. Provide strong sense of corporate responsibility
5. Enhanced positive profile for the employer
6. Sharing of new ideas and perspectives
7. Chance to influence school children towards careers in Agri-food
8. The ability to market themselves and the industry
9. Exposing incorrect assumptions about the nature of the industry
10. Potential local supply of workers e.g. through Apprenticeships
11. Encourage school competitions to meet work objectives – this previously happened in conjunction with CAFRE and Sentinus
12. Employees develop new skills such as mentoring

Potential Barriers to effective engagement

Potential barriers exist in several areas as follows – structural issues, lack of information and issues concerning resources (including time and cost).

Specific barriers include:

1. Child safety requirements and insurance issues
2. Prioritisation issues for career related activities
3. Problems integrating careers activities into the curriculum
4. Funding issues for transport etc.
5. Resource issues – preparation time, organisation etc
6. Not every school has the same careers outlook

7. Lack of contacts and network details and knowledge of how to achieve these
8. Lack of understanding from prospective partners
9. Employers don't know what is expected of them
10. Teachers are in a similar position to employers per point 9

However, the presence of barriers to effective engagement and the establishment of partnerships can and should be overcome due to the economic imperative for these links.

Overcoming the Barriers

The barriers listed above should not be taken lightly; however, neither are they insurmountable. In fact, many of these barriers can be overcome simply by the strategic application of effective resource. The argument has been made for the effectiveness of mutually beneficial partnerships between schools and local employers and this is evidenced by the number of reports published which support this type of initiative. The major issues arise around the use or otherwise of intermediaries; these bodies can add significant value to partnerships and ensure that all activities are properly agreed, coordinated and benefit schools and employers equally. Torii (2018) notes that funding for intermediaries is not always available; additionally, the extra costs inherent in partnerships such as transport and substitute teaching staff are not always recognised. This is particularly important in an era when education activities are under much funding pressure, although transport might be partially offset cost wise via employer sponsorship. There is also a tantalising potential opportunity for employers to become materially involved with the supply of branded materials that schools in the partnership could use, though this could prove somewhat controversial and would require initial investigation. A situation like this could remove the need for complicated bids for excess funding in some instances so might be worth consideration.

1. Government imperative on partnerships
2. Funding as above
3. Training for teaching and employer staff as to how to best engage one another
4. Use of intermediaries to compensate for resource issues.

Why an Intermediary/Facilitator is Needed

A successful partnership is one that might be described as “win-win” with clear benefits to all involved as noted above. For this to happen there must be buy in from senior members of staff at both the employer and the schools. Torii (2018) highlights that one of the issues around partnerships is some disagreement as to who should instigate them – employers or schools – this implies that the relationship will not be even handed and demonstrates the need for each party to be clear of the purpose and expectations of the relationship from the outset. She further reports on the “the critical role that intermediary organisations play – both in brokering large scale partnership ‘ecosystems,’ but also for connecting individual schools that lack the networks, connections and resources to find industry partners. Intermediaries can take many forms – including not-for-profit organisations, government agencies or locally-led networks.” Other bodies include industry associations and universities. The intermediary provides the impulse for the partnership and ensures that activities are agreed and take place. In summary the facilitator acts as follows:

1. Brings the stakeholders together
2. Communicates with all on an ongoing basis
3. Provides an independent voice
4. Agrees points of contact and relevant details
5. Agrees activities that will take place and ensures these are suitably organised
6. Monitors activities for effectiveness and suggests improvements, if required
7. Builds the culture of the partnership

What We are Proposing

We propose to deliver a pilot partnership scheme over the 2019-2020 school year after which we can re-evaluate the effectiveness of the work. The aim is to provide a gold standard for win-win collaborations between schools and companies. To ensure that the programme is driven through, FDSS will act as a facilitator and reporting mechanism.

Following on from the pilot we will continue to develop and enhance the partnerships as far as possible and hope to achieve some level of resource to continue the work and develop sustainability.

The underlying key to success is effective communication between parties and this is the main component of the role of the intermediary.

The proposal is to take small initial steps and test these out; trying too much too soon is likely to cause issues that could lead to problems with partnership sustainability. The key issue for year one is to establish trust between the partners and ensure that all agreed activities occur as planned (within reason).

For the first year we propose

1. Teachers from the OLC visit Foyle Foods Omagh
2. School Groups visit Foyle Foods Omagh
3. Foyle Foods and FDSS commit to joint activity around careers fairs/talks etc.
4. Foyle branded Tasty Careers Maps available

Future Activities

There are many activities that can occur within the auspices of employer/schools' partnerships and these are constrained only by resources such as funding and time – with unlimited resources comes virtually unlimited activity and opportunity. As discussed above, there is no set template that will fit all partnerships, with each one being bespoke to local expressed desire, need and level of resource available. Possibly the sensible idea after an agreed pilot (with associated activities) is for the partners to then introduce, over time, more opportunities. For this reason, a list of examples of activity follows; this is not meant to be exhaustive but rather illustrates the variety of linkages which might be established.

Examples of Specific Activity

Classroom Talk

Workplace Visit

Mock Job Interview

Work Shadowing

Careers Fairs

Apprenticeship Provision

CV Preparation

Career Champions

Mentoring

Cadetship

Competitions

Sponsored Events

Curriculum Planning

Resource Development

Work Experience

Contextualised Learning

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HARVESTING TOMORROW'S SKILLS

Skills London Report.
Excel Centre London 24th November 2017

Skills London is the UK's biggest jobs and careers event for 15-24 year olds and their families which took place on 23 & 24 November 2017 at ExCeL London. According to the website there was over 33,000 visitors to Skills London 2017 and 240 exhibitors including employers, universities, colleges and training providers. The headline figure is that they were able to offer young people 55,000 job opportunities including apprenticeships.

This two-day event provided visitors with the opportunity to discover careers through interactive, inspirational activities and demonstrations, helping young people visually bridge the gap between what they enjoy doing and what they could potentially do as a career.

The key to Skills London's success is the high level of interactivity exhibitors use to engage with the visitors. Visitors could sample the different career roles on offer in a fun and inspiring environment.

By engaging visitors with focused taster activities exhibitors gained access to London's future workforce; inspiring them, entertaining them and most importantly informing them face-to-face about the career routes and job opportunities available.

The all abilities/all ambitions approach delivers visitor diversity. Visitors seek apprenticeships, training, jobs and college and university courses.

The holistic approach of Skills London combines educational institutions with employers under one roof, enabling visitors to find out about careers and the training required.

Listed below is a visual record of some of the stands with a comment on how HTS could learn from London Skills.



Interaction is the key to engagement. Various methods were adopted to bring students onto the stands. From robots, photo opportunity, service /teaching provision and virtual reality presentations. It was very obvious that the stands that adopted engagement received a considerably higher footfall onto the stand.



The image above shows the graphic difference with the stands. The Stand listed above had a too much information on the back boards and no single message that would reach out to the clients. As a result there is no engagement with the passing students.



The military is particularly good at this engagement with colourful stand showing off equipment and event getting the students to compete with each other in simple team challenges. The result being that they have more time to interact and build relationships. Answer queries and provide greater selling opportunity.





The event reserved space for presentations. This could be small groups for focused presentation or walk by providing Bite size blocks of information.

In addition to this they created a teacher's hub with higher level sector information. Aimed at increasing awareness and knowledge across the complete range of employment opportunities.

These areas were in demand across the day with timetabled presentations.



A key addition to the event was the "Live Jobs Board" This held current live job opportunities that could be applied for on site directly with the companies. This was updated throughout the event.

In Conclusion,

The event was heavily attended across the two days. The groups were organised and focused. The success of each company was dependant on the company representatives and their ability to interact with the Students. The event was attended almost 99% by students. As the exhibitors have supported the event over many years, I can only conclude that the event achieves their KPI's to justify the continued support.

HTS Support in quotes

"Just a quick email to say well done on a great event yesterday. I genuinely believe that many of the teachers attending found it beneficial and I know we got a lot of positive feedback at the stand.

Grace Cahoon HR Manager Genesis Bakery

"A really useful afternoon spent engaging with careers teachers from across the country about career and development opportunities available at Dunbia. Events like this are a fantastic way of getting word out to key people about this fantastic business and industry, and showing them the range of roles involved in getting food from farm to fork!"

Glenda Clarke, Trainer Dunbia

"Thank you for inviting us to the seminar today it was very informative and a good insight into the needs and of our local employers as well as the labour market."

Brenda McInteggart | Department for Communities

"I wanted to extend my thanks to you for such a well run and important event."

Jordan Buchanan - Economist: Ulster University Economic Policy Centre

"Awesome event today, I am sure you are glad how that went! Lots of really key discussions and great speakers." Stephen Rice MD Upskill Enterprise Ltd

"Many thanks for the opportunity to attend a great event today." Eibhelin McCaffrey

Regional HR Manager – Northern Ireland & Scotland- Kerry Foods

"Excellent workshop today, well done.... lots to think about. As always if you need any further support do give me a shout, happy to help." Angela Givan, Human Resources Director Linden

"Great to meet you yesterday and congratulations on a brilliant event, We have fun lots of different kinds of events and I know how difficult it can be to fill a room. It was really nice to be involved."

Emer Hinphey Think People

"Thank you for organising yesterday – it was really informative."

Fiona McKenzie HR Director Finnebrogue

"The event, speakers and content was fantastic; I came away totally energised and full of fresh ideas." Muriel McCullins HR Business Partner | Bunzl Ireland

