

**EVALUATION OF ESF TRAIN TO GAIN
PROGRAMME – LONDON REGION**

DELIVERED BY

**UGANDA COMMUNITY RELIEF ASSOCIATION
(UCRA)**

TENDER REF: GL.ESF.TtG

DECEMBER 2010

FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND
Investing in jobs and skills

AND

SKILLS FUNDING AGENCY

Acknowledgements

The evaluation team would like to thank everyone who invested their time in making valued contributions to the evaluation. Special thanks go to the Project Management Team and Partners: Sarah Nansukusa, Angela Reid and Hakim Kiyemba of African Network International.

We particularly appreciate their openness in responding to our questions. The team would also like to thank Allen Najjemba for organising a focus group session. Beneficiaries from Uganda Community Relief Association were enthusiastic contributors to the focus group.

Also, a lot of feedback was generated from the beneficiaries and employers during the celebration/award events around London.

UCRA and the partnership as a whole wishes to convey special gratitude to the Skills Funding Agency in particular, Jason Fletcher, Programme manager for the positive feedback which informed the direction of the programme from start to finish. It has been a pleasure working with him. Project staff said that the manager was easily approachable and always clarified on issues especially at the start of the programme when all was new.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation utilised a combination of quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods, drawing experience from our previous evaluation of ESF projects. This included analysis of existing progress reports, consultations with partners, testimonies from beneficiaries and employers to identify lessons learned and impact in general, to provide continuous improvement to the partnership, to capture the key achievements of the project and to identify areas of good practice.

Interviews

The Evaluator conducted in depth face-to-face and telephone interviews with the Project Management Team and Partners to obtain the necessary information about project achievements and lessons learnt during the delivery of the ESF Train to Gain Project

Telephone and face to face discussions were also held with beneficiaries including informal discussions as well as with employers.

Focus Group: The Evaluator also facilitated two focus groups with project beneficiaries in order to assess the impact of the project on beneficiaries and the wider community as well as the extent to which the objectives have been met.

The table below summarises the methodology used and the number of responses.

Methodology	Stakeholders	Number of Participants
Face-to-face Interviews	Project Management Team	2
Face-to-face Interviews	Partners	3
Face-to-face Interviews	ESOL Teacher	1
Telephone Interviews	Partners	2
Focus Group 1	Beneficiaries	30
Focus Group 2	Beneficiaries	4
Celebration events	All stakeholders	120

Table 1: Evaluation Methodology

Executive Summary

Introduction

This is the Final Report of the evaluation for UCRA led by Angela Reid of Ebenezer Community Learning Centre. It provides information on the project achievements and analyses its impact on the community. The aim of the evaluation was to:

- identify lessons learnt by the partnership;
- provide information to support continuous improvement of the partnership;
- summarise the key achievements
- measure progress against the previously set missions and goals
- identify areas for partnership development.

The evaluation report provides an assessment of the impact of the project on key stakeholder groups, including beneficiaries, partner organisations and employers. Central to the chosen approach to the evaluation activities were multiple stakeholder and beneficiary consultations and on-going contact with stakeholders, employers, etc. The evaluation activities were integrated into the continuous project activities and involved beneficiaries in the assessment of the Project activities.

The evaluation also included an appraisal of how such key principles of Sustainable Development, Health, Innovation, Partnership and Equal Opportunities were incorporated into the delivery of the project. The evaluation team worked together with the Project Management Team and the Partners to assess the meeting of objectives and programme principles and the overall impact on the stakeholders.

Data was collected using qualitative and quantitative research methods, including interviews, informal discussions, case studies, workshops and focus group sessions. The combination of the data obtained from these sources provided multiple perspectives to help inform the evaluation report.

Project Context

The Uganda Community Relief Association (UCRA) successfully gained ESF Train to Gain funds to support employers in London to improve the skills of their employees as a route to improving their business performance. Train to Gain is a commitment to jointly invest in training by employers and Government. Hence, the aim of the project was to support employers to ensure they successfully meet their current and future skills requirements.

Partnership

The project was partnership driven and the Partnership consists of the following organisations: Uganda Community Relief Association (lead Partner), City of London Business College, African Network International and Ebenezer Community Learning Centre.

The partnership was led by Uganda Community Relief Association (UCRA). All partners attended regular steering group meetings, participated during project set up, participated in the ongoing discussions, and project development activities, sharing of good practice and lessons learnt. This collaboration allowed and enabled successful delivery of the project and the Partnership Working was one of the strongest elements of this project

The project worked with employees in the financial Services, Hospitality, Leisure, Travel and Tourism, Health and Social Care Sector with flexible and responsive training in the workplace to achieve level 2 IT, level 2 and 3 business administration NVQs and adult basic skills. We worked with hard to reach SMEs especially the ethnic minority and women led businesses, refugee- led etc. Employees in these businesses are least likely to benefit from workplace training opportunities and their employability is restricted and they characterised with low self confidence, limited basic skills, personal barriers e.g poor access to facilities for those with physical disabilities

Project Activities

The project was well staffed including the deployment of a full time Employment Advisor responsible for publicizing and promoting the project amongst employers, managing the call centre and employer champions to promote the project widely.

1. In order to meet needs, the following were undertaken:
2. Intensive outreach
3. One to one assessments to identify needs and IAG
4. Course Tasters to promote interest
5. Individual initial needs assessment with ILP to address individual and company needs
6. Provision of 1-2-1 continuing support
7. Flexible training modules, time and place to suit employer and employee
8. Progressive counselling

Project Achievements

The Partners delivered numerous support and educational programmes to employees, including literacy and numeracy skills levels 1 and 2, Information and Communication Technology Level 2, NVQ courses in health and social care, business administration, customer service and ITQ for Users levels 2 and 3. During the lifetime of the project 287

individual participants were assisted by the Partners of which 70% were women, 30% men, 9% with disabilities. All beneficiaries received assessment, planning, support, Information, Advice and Guidance and all participated in the educational programmes which resulted in 343 successful accreditations achieved in the following categories:

- 83 Level 1
- 244 level 2
- 16 level 3

Breakdown of ethnicity

Asian/Asian British	17%
Black/Black British	52.5%
White	20.5%
Other	8.0%
Not known	2.0%

Of the 287 participants, some undertook more than learning aim depending on level of need and ability. Based on the target group we worked with, the majority needed support with literacy or numeracy in addition to receiving training with the NVQ course and 166 people received basic skills training as additional support to enable them compete effectively in the labour market.

Summary of Achievements – Outputs and Results at each Level

Description	Planned	Actual	% Achievement
Participant starts	264	287	101.71
Start on qualification at level 1	80	89	111.25
Start on qualification at level 2	270	312	115.55
Start NVQ Qualification at level 3 – Business Admin	14	18	128.57
Start Basic skills (excluding ESOL)	150	166	110.66
Start NVQ level 2 Health and Social Care	50	56	112
Start NVQ Level 2 – ICT/Administration/customer service	150	158	105.33
Complete and Achieve full NVQ level 1	84	83	98.80
Complete and Achieve full NVQ level 2	254	244	96.06
Complete and Achieve full NVQ level 3	15	16	106.66
Complete and Achieve basic skills qualification	145	148	102.06

Table 2 – Result and Outputs

The combination of the local knowledge of target group, informational and psychological support offered by partnership was very successful – we are part of the community we serve hence it was easy to relate and cut through. The flexible approach to delivery ensured high success rates – we went to the learners in their own time and venues as

agreed by employer, and we offered a mobile service where we moved with our own training materials which could be customised based on space, etc. We operated a Mobile Bus fully equipped with resources and it could be parked outside with learning taking place without having to inconvenience the employer



Orbit Bus is an innovative mobile IT suite that takes learning into the community



Equal opportunities – cross section of participants on the Orbit Bus

Cross Cutting Themes

The Partners had a longstanding commitment to equal opportunities, health and sustainable development. The major success of the project, however, was innovation and empowerment. The project worked with employers/communities from diverse cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds **empowering** them by involving them into project activities, making learners and employers own their learning from beginning to end. Educational sessions for the beneficiaries based in the Mobile bus proved to be **innovative**, successful and very popular.

IAG and Equal Opportunities

The beneficiaries that participated on the programme were from a range of backgrounds and nationalities. Many of them had originally come from countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, India, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Somali, Carribeans, Congo and Ethiopia. Their background included people who had had no previous formal education, mainly because they had grown up during major conflict in their countries of origin or because their cultures did not encourage education of women. Some people have been working as care workers over 10 years but have never had the chance to access any learning as they did not perceive the need for it. Others had been ill for so long and are just returners to work.

Many of the students had psychological problems through trauma experienced in their country of origin. Some of those students were on medication to manage their symptoms. The IAG specialists were aware of these issues and were sensitive to their needs. This supported beneficiaries in their learning and allowed 84% beneficiaries successfully to complete the programme.

Case Study

Ismail Bukenya - Refugee

Ismail is from Uganda and has lived in the UK since 2000. He applied for asylum on arrival at Heathrow Airport. On arrival in the UK he was arrested in Kent and taken to a detention camp. From there he was sent to Stockport on Tees where he was given a room and vouchers for food. He experienced racism from the local community.

He had to wait for 8 years before legal status was given to him to stay in the UK and work without any restrictions. He lost all skills having not worked for those many years and had no formal qualification before joining the ESF programme

He was heavily depressed and disoriented when he joined the programme and needed IAG intensive which he found. He was assisted with basic skills in literacy and numeracy and also successfully completed a Diploma in IT for Users level 2. He has gained a lot of confidence and his manager says that he is one of the best employees at work.

Ismail would like to study level 3 if his employer co-funds it



A cross section of participants we have assisted



In Class Group Learning at CSEP



Learners at the Poppy Factory – Richmond. 10 assisted but all with serious/varying learning difficulties– certificate award day February 2011

The staff had specialist knowledge in the fields in which they were working. This knowledge was related to understanding the barriers confronting target group. These included: -

- Understanding and appreciating the cultural, social and economic backgrounds
- Knowing how, when and where to signpost clients to other relevant services;
- Being aware of legislation and benefit rules relating to refugees;
- Having the personal qualities necessary to create trust and confidence.

The project adopted and used the personal advisor approach, enabling the participants to have access to a person who was able to provide advice, support and encouragement whenever the need occurred. The personal advisor spoke with the participants on a regular and frequent basis to see if they needed help.

Sustainable Development

Protecting the environment: We addressed environmental issues by promoting amongst staff, clients and partners the use of public transport, use of energy efficient equipment, reduce waste through increased use of ICT and by buying environmentally friendly goods. Environmental issues were integrated into the course contents and atleast 40% of the participants were given training to learn using computers to save information and not to print unless necessary. We operate a “reduce, reuse and recycle approach. UCRA has a Green Policy that addresses

improvements in waste minimisation and improved business efficiency including ethical purchasing and powering down electrical equipment when not in use .e.g computers, fax machines, photocopiers, etc. All staff spoken to during the evaluation appeared to be well aware of the policy and its practicalities.



ICT Tutor addressing his class on efficient use of resources using ICT

Progress for everyone: As seen already in sections above, the project delivered various activities to the participants and it imparted skills and knowledge to enable both employers and employee fulfil their potential. This has promoted self esteem, confidence to progress and participate and for the employers to compete in the labour market. This will indeed leave a legacy of qualifications leading to high and steady levels of economic growth and employment.

Health Cross Cutting Theme

Our approach was informed by the Mayor's Health Inequality Strategy 2007 as well as Health Work, Productive WorkPlaces... What works? (DH 2007).

We engaged learners from hard to reach and deprived backgrounds including refugees, BAME people with an identified high risk of life shortening diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, mental health, etc. We did have a large

number of people from the Pakistan community and these have been linked to high levels of Diabetes, black people with mental health, etc

We did encourage learners to walk to training venues and had a no smoking policy which all were required to adhere to. By increasing learners' capacity to secure sustainable employment through raising their skills levels, the project greatly contributed to the reduction of health inequalities resulting from poverty and unemployment, considering the rate of unemployment is four times higher among minority groups.

Project Impact

In order to assess the aspects of the Educational Programmes and the impact these programmes had on the beneficiaries, we have conducted post-programme evaluation focus group sessions with 34 students, 10 employers and one ESOL tutor.

Overall the learners were very positive about the programme and full of praise for the input of the tutors and managerial staff.

For participants, the project contributed to their improved self-esteem and confidence, gained accreditations and provided them with a sense of achievement. For employers, the project brought in the required skills levels required for current and future completion. All employers had concerns with the poor levels of literacy and numeracy amongst their employees, computer illiteracy and lack of confidence when dealing with customers. We had a big clientele from the small community care organisations and atleast 30% of participants were of refugee background.

By coming here (to UCRA) I gained confidence to start my own business. I am confident now that I will be able to start my restaurant. I was working at the necessary as the admin officer"¹ - beneficiary

For partner, the project further enhanced their project management skills and established the robust systems and processes in their organisations. This supported the efficient project delivery.

¹ UCRA beneficiary



Impact on the Wider Community – Award Ceremony December 2010

The project was widely advertised especially via Croydon Council Website for a full year which promoted importance of learning, increased awareness in local communities of support offered by the Skills Funding Agency and what Train to Gain means for employers in general. This created a positive perception and generated confidence amongst employers and the community as a whole. Towards the end, the project also had a number of dissemination events to celebrate success.

Impact on the Partner Organisations and Delivery Staff

One of the Tutors at UCRA said that the Business training she delivered allowed her to be innovative, flexible and gain knowledge about how to work with this group of people.

“The passion for me has been watching how women coming to our programme had very, very small ideas in some cases believing they could not take it any further and watching them growing over number of weeks: how they become more confident and more empowered, but more importantly, feeling that when they leave the programme they can do something on their own – Adeela Anwar, Tutor.

TESTIMONIES/CASE STUDIES

1. N Shah – “I am in my 60s, self employed and have no time to do any training. I do not know what made me enquire about the courses but when I did, I was encouraged to come

and have a talk. I liked what I heard that day. I could not attend during the day time but UCRA offered me the flexibility of training in the evenings. I have had 30 years of trading but without using the computers, I have completed the Level 2 Diploma in ICT for users and I can now trade using emails, use the website, etc. My tutor was available 24/7 including outside class hours”.



Graduates – Mr and Mrs Shah 15th December 2010

2. Chitra Rajan – “I found the staff very helpful and I have learnt so much. I am very grateful that I was given this chance and I can help others”
3. Worrall Linton – I have 3 children and I work full time. I have been with the same employer for approx 15 years. Life is so busy. I saw the advert about free courses at the Croydon Council Website and then I took it to my manager who contacted UCRA. They came to assess me and I was allowed to do NVQ in business administration at level 3 together with ICT. At the beginning, it was very challenging and it felt like my brain had cobwebs as nothing seemed to be getting in. However, the tutors were very inspirational and encouraging. They made me learn. Thank you so much to UCRA and to Croydon Council that advertised the courses in our area. Never too old to learn as I have attained a qualification in my late forties as a father of 3.
4. Aniedi Ebong – Health and Social Care Worker. I work for Caretec as a care assistant and NVQ level 2 is an essential requirement for my job. I was about to lose my job as there was no budget to train us and it is a legal requirement to have the NVQ. Thanks to the Skills Funding Agency for the financial assistance and thanks to my tutor for the inspiration given to me to enable me complete the NVQ. I am now safe in my job.

5. **Shanti** – “It was an excellent idea to use local authority websites to advertise the courses as most people look at them daily. I am teaching Assistant in small school. I needed support with my literacy and numeracy skills and I have now gained level 2 in both numeracy and literacy. I have a lot of confidence and it feels like I have done GCSEs in the UK”.
6. **Farhat** – “I am responsible for the production of leaflets for my company and I always had to take my work home for my children to help me design the leaflets on the computer. I am now independent after completing the course. UCRA as an Agency is incredible and I would recommend it to anyone else looking for skills”.
7. **Beverly McKenzie** – “I was working for a nursery as the admin officer and I have 3 children who are very young. It was quite tough working full time fixed hours with 3 children. With the support of my manager, I enrolled on the NVQ business course and successfully completed it in July. Immediately, made a big jump, left my job and started my own business”.



Beverly McKenzie – I made a big jump and started my own business

8. **Employer – Russel Cummings**: “The course enabled all of us to review job roles and for staff to staff focusing. There is a lot of skills improvement within the team”



Russell Cumming – employer

Lessons Learnt

The following are some of the lessons learnt during 16 months of delivery of this project

- It is very important to ensure that the aims, targets and responsibilities are clear to all the Partners in order to avoid misunderstanding and inefficiency in the project delivery.
- The Communication Plan should be in place at the very beginning of the project to ensure smooth communication process between the Partner organisations.
- In order to deliver useful services and support to employers, it is necessary to develop their understanding of the project aims and objectives. This will create a sense of belonging to the project and empowers them to participate in the project delivery.
- Conducting a full needs assessment for each joining participant, induction and agreeing the ILP on the onset is crucial. The ILP should be SMART

- Delivering training in a flexible manner and customise it to fit the needs of employers contributed to our high level of retention and successful completion. The “mobile bus” was very popular as employers did not have to look for training space especially in small care homes where space is an issue. The bus is well equipped with all computers – an initiative sold to us by the College of North East London. You can park the bus anywhere safe and learning begins.
- Being part of the community we serve also facilitated recruitment. This is the community that had been left behind perceived as hard to reach and had no motivation towards learning.
- Building the capacity of voluntary and community organisations of our kind to address issues of training, health and training is also recommended to be able to reach which mainstream or large organisations may not be able to do . These organisations are usually the first port of call for those who are unfamiliar or distrustful of more formal services such as colleges.
- Partners identified that while the participants were highly motivated, they needed more individual support and tutor time than mainstream students to overcome the barriers.
- Sense of belonging to the project is very important to the participants. They need to be consulted and involved in the design of the educational programmes in order to succeed. The research conducted by Malcolm Knowles showed that compared to children and teens, adults have special needs and requirements as learners. They need to be free to direct themselves and chose the subjects that were interesting to them. He said:

‘Teachers must actively involve adult participants in the learning process and serve as facilitators for them. Specifically, they must get participants’ perspectives about what topics to cover and let them work on projects that reflect their interests

Good Practice and Recommendations

The ESF Train to Gain was led by the community organisation, UCRA together with two other community organisations – African Network International and Ebenezer Community Learning Centre. The strength of the community organisations is in the knowledge about BAME, their needs and life situation as they are part of the community they serve.

The Partnership has developed the expertise in working with the Small medium BAME-owned employers and the new innovative areas to engage and empower them – we worked with women groups, black owned care homes, people with no

literacy or numeracy skills and had never participated in learning before in their lives. These expertise can be shared with the other organisations intending to work with similar groups. For example, the Orbit Bus provision was very successful in terms of delivery of the training to the community and should be duplicated by the other organisations to help them to reach hard to reach groups like new migrants, refugees and disabled people.

It is recommended, that in-service training be provided for staff in mainstream service organisations to enable them to understand and address the needs of small and medium BAME owned organisations including refugee community organisationa and to make mainstream services more accessible in meeting these needs. With the introduction of Minimum Contract Thresholds by the SFA, organisations like UCRA will no longer be in a position to lead projects of this kind and these lessons should be transferred along.

Special Thanks to the members of staff that actively and whole heartedly delivered the different aspects of this programme.



Yvonne Bizayi, Shiela Musyoki, Jackie McCalla, Sarah Nansukusa and Peter Quagraine



The Graduates – February 2011