

South West Regional Employment Forum

Paper Title: Further proposals for operation of the SW REF Research Forum

1.0 Purpose

1.1 To respond to proposals made for the replacement of the SW Labour Market Research Network¹ by a new Employment and Skills Research Forum operating as a sub-group of the SW REF.

2.0 Background

2.1 The SW Labour Market Research Network met on 5th September 2002 to consider the role, remit and membership of the SW Employment and Skills Research Forum (Research Forum) as proposed in the draft FRESA dated 30 July 2002.

2.2 Network members supported the Research Forum proposals and agreed that this paper should be prepared for consideration by REF on 23rd September. Notes on specific research proposals in the SW FRESA have been sent separately to SW RDA.

3.0 Proposal

3.1 To facilitate effective communications, we believe that at least one SW REF member should also be a member of the Research Forum. For the same reason, Research Forum meetings should be synchronised with those of the SW REF.

3.2 We consider that research colleagues from HERDA and LSDA should be members of the Research Forum. This is in addition to the membership in the original proposal, i.e. research representatives from SLIM; RDA; local LSC offices; Job Centre Plus; Government Office; TUC; CBI (or other employer representative such as FSB); local government; and sector representation.

3.3 The need for sector representation in the Research Forum is clear but it is notable that there is no regional structure in the Sector Skills Development Agency. In the meantime the Forum should seek to bring in sector specialists as appropriate.

4.0 Financial/Resource Implication

4.1 The Research Forum will have significant secretariat responsibilities that would be most appropriately discharged by SLIM under contract to the SW RDA.

4.2 All members of the Research Forum will need to balance the time they

¹ See Annex A for a list of participants in the meeting.

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contribute to the Forum's work programme with their responsibilities to employing organisations. SW REF partners are requested to endorse this commitment by staff to meetings of the Research Forum. Since time available from partners will be limited, a significant increase in research activity is likely to require use of one or more of the following options:

- > extension of SLIM's secretariat role to include project management;
- > secondments to the Research Forum from partner organisations; and
- > pooling of funds to commission research.

4.3 The integration of research agenda between partner organisations and the longer term planning implied by the FRESA process provide opportunities for more coherent regional research activities and joint working, e.g. integration of ESF Regional Development Plan and SW RDA State of the Region analysis. This integration, however, requires suitable lead times and synchronisation of research plans with the relevant planning and resource allocation processes in the region, e.g. SW RDA, ESF, LSC, etc.

5.0 Contribution to South West FRESA

5.1 The Research Forum's contribution to the FRESA process should include:

- > advising SW REF and sub-groups on employment and skills research matters
- > initiating and managing research activities on behalf of SW REF and sub-groups
- > highlighting strategic issues to SW REF, based upon research evidence
- > disseminating research findings to other audiences within the SW region in support of the SW FRESA
- > consulting on research needs and identifying gaps in research to inform and develop the SW FRESA
- > co-ordinating research activity between Research Forum/SW REF partner organisations

6.0 Recommendation

6.1 We recommend that the SW REF approve this paper as supplementary guidance in the creation of the new SW Employment and Skills Research Forum.

6.2 We recommend SW REF approve that early tasks for the Research Forum should include:

- > establishing Research Forum, appointing chair, establishing terms of reference, etc.
- > establishing relationships with SW REF and sub-groups
- > collating research plans and priorities of partner organisations
- > identifying key regional research gaps

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- > identifying resourcing opportunities for research agenda
- > consulting with SW REF on planned research activities, e.g. LSC funded regional household and employer surveys
- > agreeing Research Forum workplan with SW REF

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Annex A – Attendees of SW Labour Market Research Network 5th September

Marina Auburn, Research Manager, Devon and Cornwall LSC

Rose Bird, Head of Rapid Response, JobCentre Plus Regional Office

Ann Bussey, Employment Intelligence Unit Manager, JobCentre Plus Regional Office

Stephanie Ellis, Head of Communications and Research, LSC Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole

Chris Evans, Director, Marchmont Observatory (SW SLIM)

Liz Georgeson, FRESA Manager, SW RDA

Brian Humphreys, Research and Planning Manager, LSC Wiltshire and Swindon

Gareth James, Head of Planning and Research, LSC Somerset

Karen MacDonald – Research Manager, LSC Gloucestershire

Pauline Moylan, Sector Skills Consultant, SW RDA

Ben Neild, Manager, SW SLIM

Isabell Palmer, Head of Research, LSC West of England

Anne Marie Warrender, Regional Director, LSDA