

ECC Workforce Plan – development document

1. Introduction

The commitment was made during the process of developing the 2016/21 strategy to review and revise existing resources and the structure of the team to support implementation in the most effective and efficient way possible.

The development of the ECC workforce will help to ensure that there is the capacity, capability and flexibility within the team to deliver the level of performance required to deliver the 2016/21 strategy.

The 27 March draft of this document was used to stimulate discussion on:

- The way that the team contributes to achieving the objectives of the strategy.
- The skills, competencies and behaviours which require development to deliver the strategy.
- The shape and structure of the future workforce.

The document also outlined the process for change which will be followed to make the transition from the current to the future workforce profile.

The 31 May team meeting discussed a second draft. This third draft remains a development document for discussion: no decisions have been made at this time and no proposals are made in this paper.

2. Values

The values we espouse as an organisation are:

- **Members come first** because we are a consortium formed by the HE/FE sector for the sector: our decisions and actions are taken to benefit our membership and we are committed to service excellence for our members.
- **Creating value through innovation** underpins our product and service development. We anticipate sector challenges and changes, and find practical ways of helping members and partners to respond to them.
- **Fairness and equality** permeate our approach to excellence through people, performance and reward.
- **Collaboration** is core to our work: we are a consortium and place great value on working with and through others.

These values are not simply designed for our members and stakeholders, but should underpin all that we do internally as well as externally.

In addition to our organisational values, we have agreed that the following behaviours are important to us as a team:

- Valuing the team
- Taking responsibility for planning time
- Encouraging challenge
- Courtesy

The development and delivery of a workforce plan is an opportunity to demonstrate all these behaviours and values, particularly those of fairness, equality and creating value through innovation, in the interests of achieving the organisation's vision.

3. Strategic Direction

ECC has defined its strategic direction/intent, and has set out the actions required to achieve the business objectives.

As well as 'Business as usual' (high volume and high quality member services, consultancy, training and running a cost-efficient consortium), our focus for 2016/21 is on four areas of 'Change':

A: Relationships and Collaboration

Being proactive in identifying, managing and generating value from our communications, partnerships and collaboration.

B: Market development

Defining ECC's opportunities, evaluating each viable option and entering those most likely to enhance our offering.

C: Product and Service Development

Maintaining and developing our products and services, enabling organisations to deliver excellence through people, performance and reward.

D: Technology and Innovation

Ensuring a technically sound product offering and using technology and/or innovative approaches to support ECCs products, services and working practices.

Organisational capability

Given the context that we work within and our strategic direction, our organisational capability needs include:

- role analysis expertise

- consultancy and training skills to deliver, share, and enable good role analysis practice
- business management skills
- business development and sales skills
- a fit-for-purpose role analysis scheme (our core product and reason for the consortium)
- HE/FE knowledge and credibility
- Skills and time to engage positively with members
- Skills and time to define and deliver strategic projects
- Technical skills to plan and manage future ECC Online development
- Skills, time and credibility to develop effective partnerships and collaboration
- Marketing, communications, market development and product development skills

We have many of these in place. In terms of our current capabilities and our workforce requirements therefore, we need strengthen our future capability to deliver the strategy through:

- more emphasis on market and product / service development,
- more emphasis on communication with members,
- increased collaboration and partner working across HE / FE sector, and
- maximising the benefits of and usage of ECC Online.

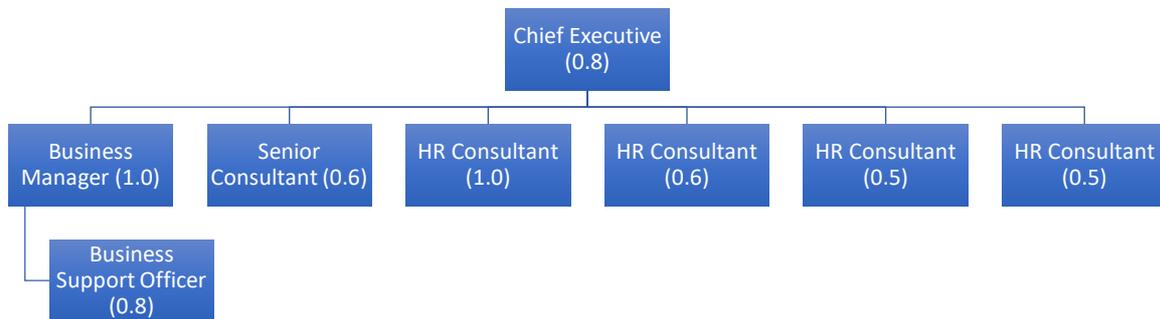
At the same time we want to improve our efficiency and sustainability by:

- maintaining membership levels in the context of potential mergers and financial constraints within HE/FE sector, and
- continuing to rebuild cash reserves depleted by investment in ECC Online.

4. Workforce Planning

Current structure and FTE

The current substantive structure with current FTEs is shown below (one 0.5 FTE Consultant is temporarily seconded to a 0.6FTE (0.5 Software Project Manager, 0.1 Consultant). Current role descriptions have been circulated within the team.



Defining the required workforce is the next step. We know that strategic development activity will require more focused resource and capacity, but at the same time we must not neglect our core business of working with and for members.

The workforce plan is not starting from a need to reduce headcount or total employment costs. It is therefore a question of how to use our existing resources most efficiently and effectively to deliver the organisational capability we need in order to achieve ECC's objectives. Any changes to posts or structure will arise from identifying what is needed from the future rather than from amending what is already in place.

The following section does not summarise all the points raised in response to previous drafts, but has been informed by those discussions.

4.1 What are we doing well?

- A clear strategy is in place, built from a process that engaged every team and Board member.
- Member retention is high.

- There are high levels of satisfaction with ECC as a whole and with individual team members (indicated by feedback forms and repeat business).
- Staff turnover is low.
- We have been productive and effective over the last few years, with targets achieved or exceeded achieved on inclusive and paid consultant days and organising new events and workshops.
- The annual conference is successful, attracting good numbers of attendees with strong speakers.
- The new ECC Online software is delivering the anticipated benefits.
- Income is favourable.
- Team members are skilled and highly committed.
- One of our strengths is the simplicity of our structure with a flat hierarchy.

4.2 What are the challenges/barriers/issues?

- We need to retain membership levels in the face of economic challenges, mergers, pressure on HE funding, and uncertainties such as Brexit.
- Having the right number of people in the right places. Our small part-time team is geographically dispersed which presents logistical challenges.
- Consultants with identical titles and very similar accountabilities and duties means our culture is to expect everyone to have the same level of involvement in everything.
- The fact that Consultants' role descriptions have evolved over time and differ in wording is probably unhelpful.
- Opportunities to collaborate and to share learning and expertise within the team are not being maximised.
- Ensuring business resilience and minimising over-reliance on individuals.
- Do we have the right balance between putting members first, and resourcing for future strategic development?
- We don't always have consultant cover for every day of the week (esp. Fridays).

- We need to strengthen our capacity and expertise in business development and communications.
- Internal communications and ways of working - people don't always know what other people are working on and how they fit into different pieces of work. Some feel it is not always clear who is accountable or responsible for everything.

4.3 Ideas for improvement

NB. These are not proposals, just ideas that have emerged so far. Some of them may therefore contradict each other (eg. uniformity of Consultant roles).

Shaping the structure

- Clarify the different areas of the business, and who leads and is involved in each:
 - Business (HR, marketing, branding, finance)
 - Systems Development (ECC Online, website, help desk, internal ICT)
 - Services (service development, BAU consultancy, BAU training, guidance documentation etc)
- We need the roles and capability to work with sector partners effectively and collaboratively.
- Avoid adding extra layers of line management – we don't need to create eight unique roles. Formal, fixed lead roles and more line management would slow us down. As a small team we need to be agile and able to respond to customer needs as these evolve.
- Reduce over-reliance on individual roles and role holders
- Develop business support roles to support the consultant team with member contact work and increase overall capacity for business development. We should revisit and enable the idea of the central team providing 'account management' alongside consultants.

Consultant roles

- Potentially fewer consultants at higher FTE could provide greater cover across the week (although it is also argued that more consultants at lower FTE – providing this is not rigidly fixed into specific days – can provide greater flexibility)
- Develop all ECC roles in improving service quality and strategic and partner development work.

- Although Consultant accountabilities and core tasks are the same and annual objectives are highly consistent, the wording in the role descriptions has evolved with each recruitment and these are now out of step with each other. There is an opportunity to review and harmonise Consultant role descriptions to improve clarity and consistency.
- Another view is that we don't necessarily need all consultants to have an identical job description and person specification. However, too many unique JDs could introduce unnecessary complexity in remuneration, and if we tied unique JDs to individuals it might make it difficult for us to tackle the variety of work that changes over time as well as possibly restricting personal development to that relevant only to a specific role at that time.
- Adopt a more matrix style approach with hybrid or portfolio consultants who look after varying numbers of members and lead areas of the business and / or projects?
- If we created different roles we would need to ensure we don't create 'gaps' which risk work not being done.
- Once roles have been defined, review job titles especially for consultants
- Improve utilisation of associate consultants to free up employed consultant resources.

Development

- Maximise opportunities to develop or enrich roles where these match the needs of the overall business
- Invest in team and personal development to continue bringing values to life and building the team.
- Skills development, for example in communications and IT/social media.

How we work

- Communications could be improved; email is necessary as we are a dispersed and largely part-time team, but we need to use it more effectively and appropriately.
- Reaffirm the team values, and review behaviours with every team member at every review meeting so that any issues are identified and addressed promptly.
- The workforce plan should foster good working relationships and behaviours.

5. Developing the plan

Based on the issues raised during discussion, a number of business requirements can be identified that the plan needs to respond to. These might include:

- Ultimately the workforce plan, shape and resource is a management recommendation for Board approval
- Start with the business objectives / needs, then create the roles to enable people to deliver that
- Account management (ad hoc advice and provision of consultancy and training) and provision of HERA, FEDRA and ECC Online to c. 120-125 members will still be our core business for the foreseeable future
- We will still need to resource strategic development work for the foreseeable future.
- Our working assumption is that we will still have a fairly level income of c£800k per annum for the foreseeable future
- The role of Associate Consultants needs to be part of the plan, but we should define the core team first, and then address how we need Associates to fit into that
- Ensure the plan identifies individual and team development and support needs as well as defining roles
- Plan needs to address ways of working and culture as well as considering roles and structure. Reaffirm values and everyone's commitment to those.
- Need to follow the correct process of role design, HERA analysis, matching people into roles etc
- The process should set out how the consultation will work and how to deal with a situation where an individual is unhappy with final decisions.
- Although we need to do this properly, let's not draw it out forever

6. Implementation plan

Action	By when	Status
Draft for discussion circulated	27 March	Complete
Discussion of draft with team – individual comments to NJ in confidence	12 -25 April	Complete
Discussion of draft with team – open GoToMeeting calls with NJ scheduled for any team member to join	18 & 19 April	Complete
Update Executive with progress	27 April	Complete
Second draft circulated	25 May	Complete
Discuss at team meeting	31 May	Complete
Third draft circulated	20 June	Complete
NJ to work on proposals for change including process and timescales	June	
Workforce plan circulated for consultation	July	
Remuneration Committee (to be arranged)	July/Aug	

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