Evaluation of the Union Learning Fund Year 4

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department for
education and skills
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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Union Learning Fund (ULF) was announced in 'The Learning Age' Consultation Paper published in February 1998. The Fund helps to promote innovative activity by trade unions to support the creation of a learning society. In the 2000 Spending Review, ULF was allocated funds to continue the work until 2004, with £7 million allocated for 2001-02, including £1 million for basic skills work.

In addition to gathering and commenting on the performance of projects, this year's evaluation has begun to address how impact could be assessed for employers.

Key Findings

- The scale of ULF activity increased in the 4th year, with 121 projects (100 new and 21 continuation projects) funded to a total of £6.9 million;

- Of the 107 Year 4 projects surveyed, there was a reported leverage of an additional 3.23m of external funds to support and sustain ULF activities;

- The reported key outputs across all four years of ULF were:

  - Approximately 28,000 people have taken part in learning
  (13,000 in Year 4)
  - Approximately 4,500 learning representatives have been trained
  (1,500 in Year 4)
  - Approximately 560 accredited courses developed
  (400 in Year 4)

- The employers surveyed (94) in Year 4, wanted to be involved in union led learning supported through ULF to try and foster relationships with workers and the unions and to gain workforces that are more willing to participate in learning / training. 96% of the employers were interested and committed to remaining involved in ULF;

- The researchers outlined the feasibility of assessing economic impact of ULF on employers and businesses and concluded there were significant difficulties associated with this;

- Current arrangements for measuring and reporting developments in capacity are inadequate. The lack of consistency in reporting has had implications for collecting information on performance measures and

assessing impact.

Other Findings

Year 4 Projects – Profile

Of the 121 projects supported by ULF in Year 4, some started late in the financial year, so 107 were available to this evaluation. As many of these had only recently started, 66 projects provided the information on which the analysis of outputs is based. The 121 projects were run by 39 trade unions and the TUC and secured £6.9 million of ULF funds. Some 13% of the Year 4 projects continued activities from Year 3 or earlier. 8 unions ran 5 or more projects each.

The most common activities in Year 4 were the development of learning representatives (22% of projects), ILAs (by 14%) and basic skills (17%). Access and equality were also key themes (12%). Just over 25% of projects were defined as 'national'. There were 7 projects in the South West, 10 in the East Midlands and 10 in Yorkshire and Humberside. The North West had one less project than last year (with 16), and a more balanced geographic spread of projects appears to have been achieved. Around a third of ULF projects are multi-site, with an average of 5 sites per project.

In Year 4, funding was available over 2 years until March 2003. The average ULF funding per project was just over £57,000, but the amount levered in is significantly higher than in Year 3, with an increase in both the proportion of projects levering in other funding (40%) and in the average amount levered (£71,000).

Outputs and Targets

The standard set of indicators covers the broad range of activities undertaken by ULF projects. The analysis only covers outputs achieved up to the end of January 2002 – given that many projects had not started and that many will operate to March 2003, it is likely that the timing of the report leads to understating of the overall outputs that will be achieved in Year 4.

In Year 4, the following targets have been exceeded: the number of learners achieving qualifications (actual 5,550 against a target of 4,303); the number of learning centres established or developed (66 against 48) and the number of ILAs (5,485 against 3,510). Targets such as 'the numbers of training needs analyses undertaken' and 'the numbers of individuals attending briefings/awareness sessions' were so far in excess of indicated targets that they must be treated with caution. For the targets 'the number of employers involved' and 'learners starting courses' the shortfall was considerable and it is unlikely that they will be achieved. This suggests that improvement in management and monitoring techniques,

setting of realistic targets or planning in delivery schedules to meet deadlines is needed.

Analysis of cost per output achieved demonstrates a fall in cost per unit, particularly in relation to learners enrolling and achieving qualifications. This pattern suggests that unions are building on the groundwork of earlier projects and are using the expertise and access to other resources they have gained. However, during follow up phone calls with project managers it became apparent that there is inconsistency in their understanding of what is to be recorded for some measures.

Barriers

Over 30% of projects feel that they have encountered a lack of support from employers - as 2 project managers noted:

"it is very hard to get much enthusiasm or activity from smallish private sector companies. They say they cannot afford to release people … and don't believe that setting up a long term strategy will be of benefit."

"while support from some employers has been extremely positive, the majority are still not convinced of the benefits which learning brings"

Securing release continues to be an issue, indicating the need for continued promotion of the business benefits of learning representatives to employers. The other main barriers faced have been: suspension of ILAs; difficulties in recruiting project managers and their being spread too thinly; and difficulties in arranging/getting access to courses.

ILAs were withdrawn in autumn 2001: the impact of suspension appears to have been on learners as opposed to the ULF projects, although it did impact on projects that included the delivery of learning.

Employer Impact Survey

DfES set a target to complete 300 telephone interviews with employers based on reports from year 2 and 3 project surveys of 1,700 employers being involved in ULF projects. The response rate was disappointing with 94 employers interviewed. A variety of possible reasons were identified to explain the low response rate, including the incomplete records kept on employers both by ULF projects and the Department and the number of employers involved in the projects where input

never went beyond writing letters of support for bids, resulting in an overestimation of employers actively involved.

Employer involvement in learning activity

The 94 respondents (of which 39% have been involved in ULF for 2 years or more) described the main types of learning activity they had been involved in as: basic skills (33%); learning representatives (17%); computer literacy (10%); basic IT (10%); and learning centres (10%).

The main reasons given for being involved in ULF projects were: to have a more confident/enthusiastic workforce (26%); to have a workforce that is more receptive to training (21%); to improve workforce skills (18%); to improve workforce IT skills (15%); and to have a workforce with more of the skills necessary for promotion (15%).

This sample of employers was willing to be involved with ULF to try and foster relationships with unions and the workers. Where 'harder' gains were mentioned, it was only by a few contributors, for example issues such as productivity were not ranked highly.

Employer benefits

Employers were asked how they felt that they benefit from their involvement in ULF projects. The responses focus mainly on softer aspects such as confidence of staff, improved relations and communications.

When asked about the methods used to assess these benefits, the main approaches appear to be subjective and personal in nature: observation and conversation. This does not mean that the benefits have not been real; rather that there is little consistent 'scientific' approach to measuring benefits.

Sustainability

Most employers (73%) feel that activities are likely to continue. The response was even stronger amongst those involved over a longer period and amongst public sector employers. The level of interest and commitment to remaining involved is very high, with 96% feeling strongly that they would like to continue to be involved.

Employers were asked to comment on the basis of giving release (without distinguishing between paid and unpaid), stressing that it was release from working time. 84% did not see the issue of release as a barrier.

Additionality

When asked to comment on the extent to which they felt that the activities they had been involved in would not have taken place without the funding from ULF, 62% felt that ULF funding had been important in generating the activity – with this proportion rising to 67% among those employers still involved.

Encouraging employer participation

Employers were asked to describe what they felt were the 'best and worst things' resulting from their involvement. The overall view was that ULF had been a positive and beneficial activity for them, with the 'best things' focusing on awareness, team building, confidence and building industrial relations. The amount of time required/lost through participation was mentioned by 13% of respondents but over half felt that there was nothing negative.

Employers were keen to encourage other employers to get involved, with over 50% suggesting that more marketing and promotion of the benefits of involvement in the Fund should be undertaken.

Assessing Economic Impact – Feasibility

The researchers outlined the feasibility of assessing economic impact of ULF on employers and businesses and concluded there were significant difficulties associated with this. Alternative measures might be regarded as intermediate impacts which could be defined as necessary, though not sufficient, to achieve the wider measure: these include company performance (profitability, productivity and competitiveness); attitudes to learning; communications (staff morale, staff turnover and attendance); core skills (numeracy, literacy and IT).

Through a series of employer consultations we aimed to establish whether these measures were legitimate (i.e. could ULF be a contributing factor), and if so, whether the employers had observed them and had any recording systems in place. There was a consensus that the measures were reasonable for ULF outcomes, although for some of the company performance measures it would be difficult to trace causality.

Conclusions

The purpose of the Fund remains valid: trade unions have shown that they can make a contribution to engaging and supporting individuals in lifelong learning. In ULF Year 4, there has been an increase in volumes overall and by project, and there continues to be a wide range of activities including improving access and relevance of learning offered.

The crude indicators of unit cost used have shown increased efficiency. In that sense, it is likely that value for money is also improving. However, quantitative measures on their own may not be sufficient or representative. Future activity may be better measured through 'distance travelled' by individuals and changes in attitudes as well as in participation rates.

Unions are, in general, exceeding performance targets set in projects and have become much more able to access additional resources to maintain and enhance core ULF activities. Reporting of activities such as numbers of learners engaged and training needs analyses carried out have become less reliable as a measure. As the emphasis shifts increasingly to embedding and roll-out of activity, other measures will be required to reflect what the union contribution has been.

The survey of employers established that they valued their involvement with ULF activities and that they had observed benefits. Employers have also increased their contribution to the overall resources going into projects. However, project workers appear to be confused about the nature of employer involvement – if this is to be a key measure of success, it is vital that the expected nature of involvement is understood and recorded. Similarly, it is important that expectations of employer benefits from involvement are clear. Our feasibility study on economic impacts for employers shows that this would be a difficult and perhaps unreliable exercise.

Recommendations

DfES should review the nature of employer involvement and how projects are expected to report such involvement;

DfES should review the requirements of bidding documents and prospectus to require explicit and measurable performance targets in bids;

The range of output indicators should be reviewed to reflect expectations of performance, measures of success and themes in the Fund;

The requirements and processes for collection of management information need to be clarified to simplify the process of collection and ensure consistency;

DfES administrators should ensure that required reporting information is submitted by projects;

The promotional strategy for ULF to employers should be reviewed and should include raising awareness of benefits of the ULF programme and access through partnerships with unions;

If there is a policy wish to link ULF to economic outcomes as defined by company performance, there is a need to focus ULF projects more clearly on particular, identifiable and measurable company activities;

As trade unions develop their role as learning intermediaries, ULF managers should determine measures that reflect the functions of affecting the supply of learners and the provision of learning, for example to report changes in attitude as well as activity.

INTRODUCTION TO THE YEAR 4 EVALUATION

> *"At the outset the Union Learning Fund was a new and innovative experiment. It has now exceeded all expectations by becoming an established part of the lifelong learning agenda… this is the time to move into a new phase from experimentation to consolidation. We need to ensure that all projects address the issues of capacity, sustainability and integration to ensure the momentum we have built up is maintained…"*
>
> David Blunkett, Foreword to the Prospectus for ULF, Year 4.

Background

1.1 The Union Learning Fund (ULF) was announced in 'The Learning Age' Consultation Paper published in February 1998. The Fund aims to promote innovative activity by trade unions to support the creation of a learning society.

1.2 In its first year the fund had a budget of £2 million, this subsequently increased substantially over the last Parliament. In the 2000 Spending Review, ULF was allocated funding to continue the work until 2004. The funding was allocated, as follows:

- £7m for 2001-02 (£6m plus £1m for basic skills);
- £9m for 2002-03 (£7m plus £2m for basic skills);
- £11m for 2003-04 (£8m plus £3m for basic skills).

1.3 Each year, the Fund has had a number of key themes against which the unions and their partners were invited to bid. The key theme for year 4 was age diversity – encouraging the provision of learning opportunities for workers of all ages. It has been an implicit requirement of ULF that union led learning activities should not substitute for provision that has been, or should have been provided by the employer.

1.4   Success, or impact for the Union Learning Fund would be observed in increased and improved structures within trades unions to support individuals to take up and benefit from learning activities (for example, the development of dedicated lifelong learning units/staff in union offices, of supported networks of union learning representatives (ULRs), or union led access to provision such as through learndirect). In addition to acquiring improved qualifications and skills, learners themselves may be seen to improve their employment prospects, either by being better placed to retain their jobs or to seek promotion or progression elsewhere.

1.5   The themes of ULF have not had an explicit requirement that projects should have a direct and measurable impact on the profitability of commercial businesses, rather focusing on raising awareness, access and quality of learning opportunities to individuals who may as a result benefit from enhanced job security and prospects. However, the involvement of employers and the benefits they gain from this is key to the measure of increased union capacity described above.

1.6   During 2001/2002, the DfES has been working jointly with the National Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to prepare for the handing over of the responsibility for the ULF to the LSC. These changes provide an opportunity to ULF projects that seek to develop lifelong learning activities and integrate them with the work of other partners seeking to improve workforce skills and promote lifelong learning.

1.7   The Prospectus for Year Four of the ULF lists seven key themes:

- **Innovation**: involvement of new unions or encouraging new ideas;

- **Consolidation:** consolidating and spreading good practice;

- **Focus:** equal opportunities, age diversity, non-traditional learners;

- **Capacity:** adding value to the 'union card', i.e. providing new opportunities or services to members, increasing the ability of trade unions to provide lifelong learning activities, and improving the role/perception of trade union contribution to lifelong learning;

- **Sustainability:** linkage to the strategic objectives of the Government and the trade union movement in terms of education, skills and economic competitiveness;

- **Partnership:** with employers, intermediaries, providers, other unions;

- **Organisational development:** joint work with employers.

Evaluation Objectives

1.8 The objectives for each round of the evaluation have built on the themes and findings of earlier rounds. A key element in the formative evaluation process to date has been that of supporting both TUC Learning Services and the individual unions and projects to build their capacity, to gather appropriate management information and to use this information for assessment of development options for the projects.

1.9 The objectives of the evaluation of the ULF have been to:

- report progress and performance of projects;

- assess whether **project activities are sustainable** over the longer term.

- identify the **longer term impacts of ULF activities on unions**, such as changes in union management and policy on lifelong learning and the building of partnerships with other organisations.

1.10 The evaluation has been developed to report on the following key issues:

- To what extent is the ULF successful in achieving overall objectives?

- How sustainable is the ULF?

- To what extent do unions have the capacity to deliver lifelong learning?

- What additional advantages does the Union get from being involved in the ULF?

- What are the benefits for Union Representatives, for instance, do they gain project management skills?

- To what extent have the Unions developed partnership arrangements with employers to encourage learning among the workforce? (e.g. Investors in People, University for Industry)

- Are there examples of innovative ways of encouraging learning (including examples of good practice), which could be disseminated more widely and to other contexts?

- Why do some employers have less interest/commitment to having ULF in their workplace than others? (e.g. size of firm, sector, poor relationship with the union)?

- Why do barriers to the development of ULF occur in the workplace (35% of projects said that this was the case in Evaluation of ULF Year 3)?

- What can be done to overcome resistance to ULF by employers?

- What initial perceptions did employers have of the ULF project and did that change?

- How do employers perceive unions in general?

1.11 To date, the evaluation objectives for the Fund have not focused explicitly on the benefits to employers/businesses arising from their engagement with ULF projects. As the focus of the Fund increasingly shifts to embedding capacity, these questions of impact become more important. This year's evaluation has therefore begun to address how impact could be assessed for employers.

Methodology

Strand One

Stage One

1.12 The ULF database was updated to include data on year 4 projects, and continuation year 3 projects.

Stage Two

1.13 Year 4 and continuation Year 3 project managers were sent a project questionnaire (Appendix A) by post. The questionnaire included questions on the following issues:

- achievements;
- barriers;
- impact on the union;
- additional funding;
- learners;
- data monitoring;
- employer details;
- union rep activity;
- basic skills learners.

1.14 This year the questionnaire included an enhanced section on working with employers and asked project managers to supply employer contact details. All project managers were offered advice and support in completing the questionnaire and 21 project managers who had returned their questionnaires were contacted by a YCL consultant to clarify issues raised in the questionnaire return.

Strands Two and Three

1.15 In these Strands, all Year 2 and Year 3 ULF projects were sent a postal survey requesting contact details for the employers involved in their projects. The employer details gathered from Years 2, 3 and 4 projects were refined to eliminate duplications and to ensure an accurate sample. A sample of employers was interviewed by telephone to find out the benefit and impact on business performance of union led learning activity supported through ULF.

Strand Four

1.16 A feasibility study was carried out to determine the scope and models for a possible employer impact assessment, based on appropriate "hard" indicators, in a future ULF evaluation. This included scoping case studies with four employers that helped to determine what was realistic to assess.

Report Structure

1.17 This report includes quantitative and qualitative findings and is structured, as follows:

- **Section 2** – A review of the projects in the fourth round;
- **Section 3** – Outputs and targets achieved;
- **Section 4** – Barriers to achieving targets;
- **Section 5** – Impact of ULF 4 projects;
- **Section 6** – A survey of employer involvement with ULF;
- **Section 7** – Findings of the Employer Survey;
- **Section 8** – Feasibility options: assessing economic impact;
- **Section 9** – ULF 1998-2002: a review of progress;
- **Section 10** – Conclusions of the fourth evaluation;
- **Section 11** – Recommendations.

2   A REVIEW OF PROJECTS IN THE FOURTH ROUND

Introduction

2.1   A total of 121 projects (100 new projects and 21 continuation projects) have been supported by the Union Learning Fund in Year 4.   Contracting information was available in January 2002 for a total of 107 projects (94 new projects and 13 continuation projects[1]).   Thus, 107 project questionnaires were distributed.   A total of 66 completed questionnaires were returned – a response rate of 62%.

2.2   At the time of writing funding information was available for all 121 projects, but not full bid information.   Therefore the analysis presented in this report is based on:

- funding information – 121 projects;
- bidding information – 107 projects;
- questionnaire returns – 66 projects.

2.3   For clarity each table indicates the number of projects on which the analysis is based.   Where n equals 107, the analysis is based on the bidding information and where n equals 66, the analysis is based on the questionnaire returns.

2.4   The time distribution of all of the new ULF4 projects is:

- 79 projects received funding in the period from April 2001-October 2001 (October included);

- 4 projects received funding between November 2001 and December 2001;

- 17 projects received funding from January 2002.

2.5   ULF Year 4 funded 8 two year projects and 113 one year projects.   13 of the new projects funded by ULF 4 began in January 2002.   Thus, 20% of the new projects are unlikely to have significant achievements to date.

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[1] 13 continuation projects were originally identified by the ULF3 database and subsequent investigation of the questionnaires identified a further 8 projects.

2.6   In this section, we provide an outline of the projects. In particular, we look at the type of projects, the location of activities by region and the partnerships that support project delivery. In addition, we report on the distribution of ULF funds and the additional funds levered from other external sources to support activities.

Number of projects and unions

2.7   In Year 4 of the ULF, based on information supplied by the DfES at the end of May 2002[2], a total of **£6.9m** supported **121** projects run by 39 unions and the TUC (including TUC Learning Services and 4 regional TUC teams). Over 13% of the Year 4 projects continued activities supported in the previous year. 8 unions ran five or more projects including:

- UNISON (21 projects);
- GMB (15 projects);
- CWU (8 projects);
- PMU (8 projects);
- T&G (14 projects);
- AEEU[3] (9 projects);
- BFAWU (5 projects);
- MSF (6 projects).

Projects by Theme

2.8   The projects address a wide variety of different issues and deliver a complex set of activities, with many projects addressing more than one theme. **Figure 2.1** shows the number of projects addressing each of the main themes across the ULF in Year 4. The analysis presented in the remainder of this section is based on information supplied by the DfES at the end of January 2002 where n=107.

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[2] At the end of January 2002 the DfES sent a list of projects and contracts and this information was put onto the database with questionnaires sent to all of the project managers. A few projects have started since the end of January 2002, but these are not included in this analysis.
[3] AEEU and MSF merged to form Amicus during Year 4. Projects are treated separately.

2.9 Each year the ULF sets a series of key themes. The key themes are included in the introduction and the criteria on which the bids were assessed included the following themes:

- ILAs;
- Ufi;
- Basic Skills;
- ULRs;
- Learning Centres;
- Skills;
- Access and Equality;
- Union Strategy;
- Young workers.

Figure 2.1 ULF Project Themes Year 4
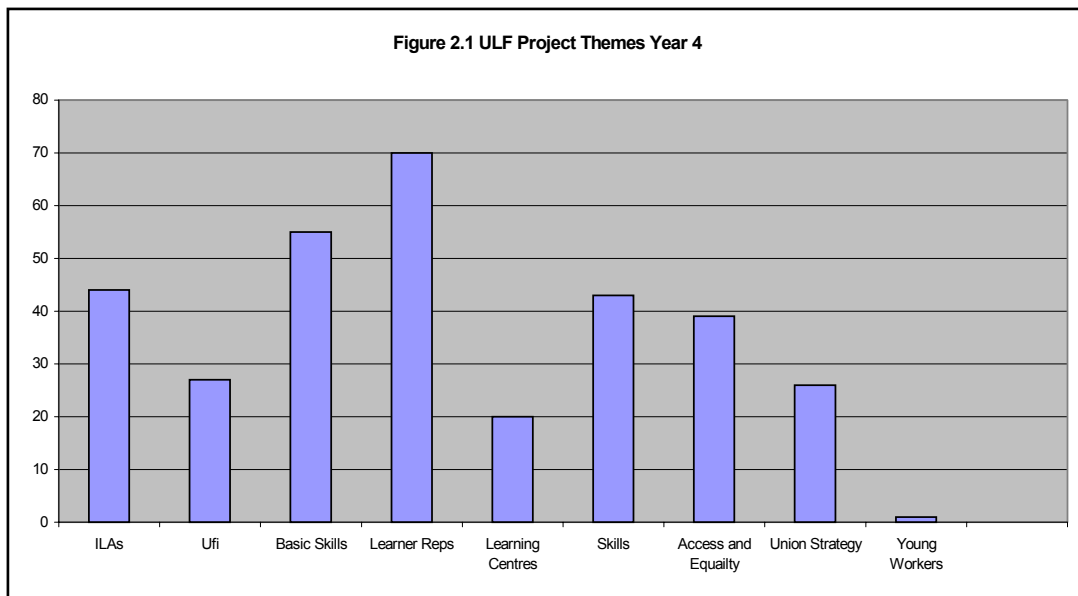
2.10 Access and equality are also key themes and are explicitly addressed by 12% of all projects. Whereas young people were a particular focus in the initial stages of the ULF, in Year 4 a priority for the ULF is age diversity, encouraging the provision of learning opportunities for workers of all ages, thus a greater focus on access and equality was to be expected.

New and Continuation Projects

2.11 'New' projects describe those that were not funded in the previous year. Conversely 'continuation' projects are those that have been funded by the ULF in previous years. Table A.1 in **Annex A** shows the number of 'new' and 'continuation' projects in year 4 based on current contracting information ie 121 projects. 100 new projects were funded in round 4 run by 34 unions. In addition, 21 projects (17%) were continuation projects, whereas in Year 3 56% of projects were continuation projects. 12 unions ran the round 4 continuation projects. Whilst it is not possible to offer a definitive explanation of why the percentage of continuation projects has reduced, the following are possible explanations:

- a change in the approach of the DfES, where it may be that new projects are getting priority over continuation projects;

- at the time when unions were bidding to ULF3, unions had limited access to other sources of funding, however unions may have had greater access to other sources of funding when bidding for ULF4;

- the projects may be looking longer term and securing funding from these other sources, thus not seeking continuation funding – total levered in funding in ULF 3 was £1.9m an average of £19,925 per project.

Projects by Region

2.12 **Figure 2.2** shows the number of projects operating in each region in Year 4. This analysis is based on the bidding documents (n=107). Just over a quarter of projects are defined as 'national' and the remaining projects are distributed throughout the regions, with relatively high concentrations in the North West and London. This concentration of projects in the North West and London areas is a recurrent theme in ULF evaluations; in the Year 3 evaluation, when 95 projects were funded, union density was explored and it was noted that the aggregate union density is highest in the North West at 45% of all employees in establishments. Density in London is relatively lower than the national average of 34% at 27%[4]. In addition, it was noted in the Year 1 evaluation that the reason for the relatively high levels of activity in London and the North West was likely to be associated with the relative strength of the TUC Bargaining for Skills teams in those regions at that time.

Figure 2.2 Geographical Distribution of the ULF 4 Projects
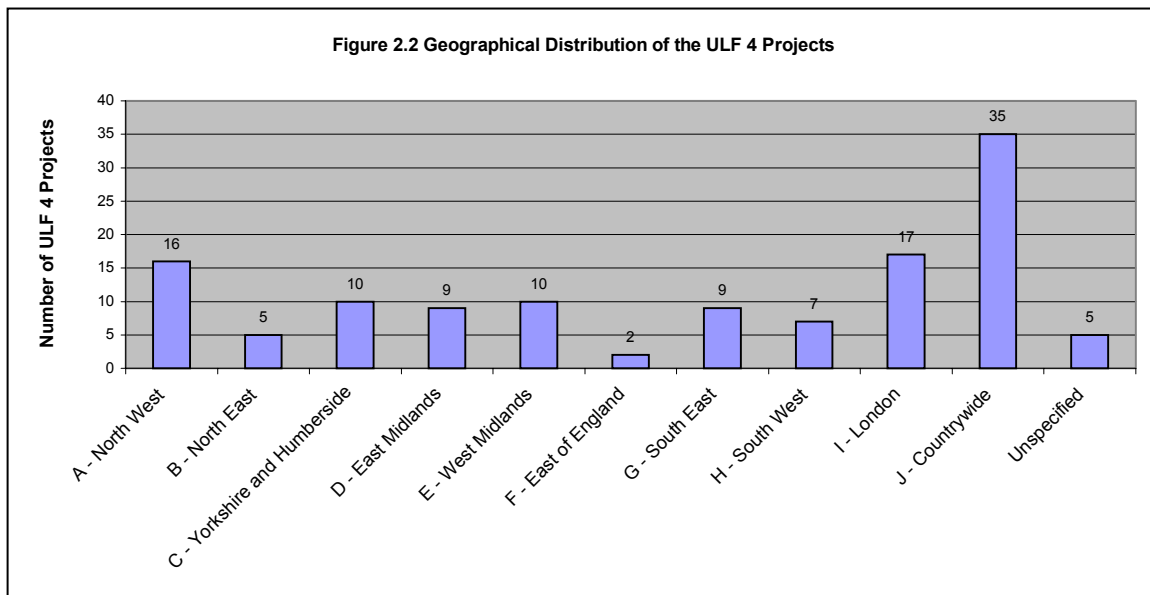
2.13 In terms of the geographical distribution[5], of the 107 projects in Year 4 there were:

- 7 projects operating in the South West (compared to 3 in Year 3);

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[4] These findings were taken from The Department of Trade and Industry (1999) Workplace Employees Relations Survey 1998.

[5] Analysis based on 107 projects for which information was available, not the total of 121 projects.

- 10 projects operating in the East Midlands (compared to 7 in Year 3); and,

- 10 in Yorkshire and Humberside (compared to 7 in Year 3).

2.14 Overall, there has been an increase in projects operating in each of the regions in Year 4 (apart from the North West which had one less project compared to Year 3). To this extent, a more balanced geographic spread of projects appears to have been achieved.

Project Funding

2.15 Union Learning Fund projects in Year 4, as in previous years, vary considerably in the amount of funding received. In Year 4, funding was available over two years until March 2003. The average funding per project has remained relatively stable at just over £57,000. **Table A.2 in Annex A** shows the total ULF funding allocated to unions in Year 4. The larger unions (AEEU, GMB, MSF, TGWU, and UNISON) received just over 39% of all ULF funding in Year 4 with a total funding of £2.7m for 48 projects. 30 unions and regional TUCs ran the remaining 73 projects with an average funding per project of £57,663.

Leverage

2.16 Additional funding leverage indicates the extent to which unions are integrating ULF with the work of other partners and have demonstrated their credibility and capacity to deliver to other funding sources. **Figure 2.3** shows the main external sources of the levered in funds.

2.17 **Table 2.1** overleaf shows that, in total, Year 4 projects (that returned their questionnaires) report **leverage of an additional £3.34m of external funds**, to support and sustain ULF activities. This represents an additional 62% over the total of ULF funding in Year 4, and represents an 80% increase over the £1.8m levered in Year 3.

Figure 2.3 - Sources of Additional Levered Funds

- Partner Funding, 4%
- Employer Funding, 13%
- Union Funding, 28%
- LSC, 10%
- ESF non-adapt, 8%
- Skills Development Fund, 5%
- College/LSC, 24%
- Other funding, 8%
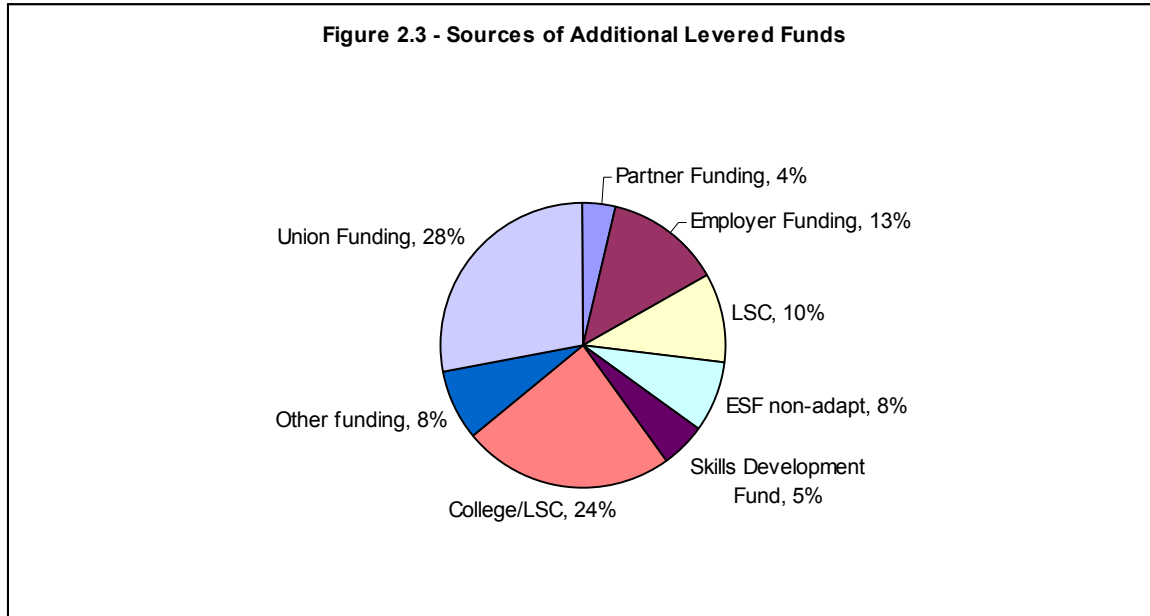
2.18 This significant increase in the amount of funding levered by unions indicates that ULF activities are being regarded as more mainstream by the union as a whole. Figure 2.3 shows that the most significant source of additional funding in Year 4 was from the unions (28% of the total levered funds), followed by the colleges/LSC (previously the FEFC). Additional funds levered in from employers are valued at £445,160.

2.19 **Table 2.1** shows that the amounts levered are also significant, as there are increases both in terms of the proportion of projects levering in funding (just over 40%) and an increase in the average amount levered in - £71,063.

Table 2.1 **Trends in Leverage of others funding in to ULF projects**				
	Year 1	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**Year 4**
Total number of projects funded	44	64	95	121
Total number of questionnaire returns	38	36	72	66
Number of projects that have levered in Funds	16	13	30	47
Proportion of all projects*	36%	20%	32%	39%
Total funds levered in	£452,800	£561,600	£1,638,000	£3,339,961
Average amount 'levered in'	£28,300	£43,200	£54,600	£71,063
* proportion of projects represents the % of projects that have levered in extra funds out of all the projects. However, as 100% response rate is unlikely the proportion of projects is likely to be an under estimate based only on projects for which a return has been received.				

External Links

2.20 Unions involved in ULF work with a wide variety of partners in the delivery of projects and link to a range of workforce development initiatives. One of the key aspects to developing learning capacity for unions is the extent to which they develop effective partnerships with other organisations.

Working with Employers

2.21 A key task in the development of the ULF projects has been the development of effective relationships with employers and to gradually increase the scale of projects, transferring models developed at one site to other sites or to new employers. In Year 4, projects have been asked to provide a variety of information relating to their relationships with employers involved in projects, including:

- the number of workplaces/sites covered by the project;
- the status of any learning agreements with employers.

2.22 Around a third of ULF projects operate at **more than one workplace or site**, covering a total of 178 different sites. This represents an average of five sites per project. Increasingly, projects report that union work on lifelong learning is **helping to develop or improve workplace partnership.** This is confirmed by employers in the telephone survey (see Section 7). **Table 2.2** shows the status of agreements across projects.

Table 2.2 Status of Agreements with Employers – Year 4 (n=66)	
	Number as identified in the project questionnaire
Number of employers involved in the projects	83
Employers involved in the delivery of projects	6
Agreements in place with employers before ULF	3
Agreements have been made as a result of the work undertaken through ULF	5
No agreements are in place at present but the Union hopes to develop an agreement in the near future	1
No Agreement and Unlikely	1

2.23 This table is derived from the employer section of the questionnaire. The key points to note are that out of 66 questionnaire returns of Year 4 projects, only 6 employers were involved in the delivery of the project and only 5 projects indicated employer involvement. However, in the outputs section of the questionnaire, 47 projects indicated employer involvement with a total of 1,192 employers involved in the projects. There would appear to be inconsistent interpretation of what is meant by employer involvement.

3   PROJECT PERFORMANCE

Introduction

3.1   In this section, we examine the performance of the projects undertaken in Year 4 of the Union Learning Fund. This chapter is structured as follows:

- Outputs;
- Targets;
- Barriers;
- Impact.

3.2   The outputs presented in this chapter are based on a quantitative analysis of key output indicators as shown in **Table 3.1**. This standard set of indicators, which has for the main part been in place since the first year of ULF, covers the broad range of activities undertaken by ULF projects. It should be noted that ILAs were withdrawn in the autumn of 2001.

Table 3.1: ULF Output Measures
1. Number of people attending awareness/briefing sessions;
2. Number of people having their learning needs surveyed/assessed;
3. Numbers of learners starting courses: learners and learning reps;
4. Number of learning representatives trained: initial training and further training;
5. Number of Individual Learning Accounts: opened and used
6. Number of accredited courses developed;
7. Number of other materials developed;
8. Number of learning centres developed/enhanced;
9. Number of people achieving a qualification: learners and learning reps;
10. Number of employers involved.

3.3   The approach of using a standard set of indicators hides the true variety of outputs achieved through ULF. In general, the outputs achieved indicate the scale and type of activities undertaken, but cannot automatically be used to measure the extent to which capacity has been built across the Union. Nonetheless, the analysis does cover the majority of quantitative outputs and provides the basis for assessment of performance in Year 4 of the ULF.

Target Setting

3.4 Whilst the achievement of targets is not the only objective of the Union Learning Fund, the ability of unions to plan, monitor and achieve outputs is a factor that helps demonstrate capacity to develop and deliver learning. A significant minority of projects (20%) did not set out quantifiable targets in their project bids to the ULF in Year 4. The analysis reports on the outcomes achieved by the 31st January 2002 and reports on achievements against targets.

Outputs Achieved

3.5 **Table 3.2** shows a summary of the total outputs achieved by projects in Year 4. It should be noted that the analysis only covers outputs achieved up to the end of January 2002. A number of projects have run on into the 2002/3 financial year and will achieve further outputs. These outputs will be reported in Year 5.

3.6 In summary the outputs achieved in Year 4 have been:

- **13,043 learners** have taken part in learning;
- 1,540 learning representatives have been trained;
- 478 of the 1,540 learning reps have undertaken further training;
- 402 accredited courses have been developed or customised;
- 5,485 ILAs have been opened and 1,978 ILAs have been used.

3.7 The interpretation of the indicators varies and as such caution should be exercised in the use of the reported figures, particularly in relation to the number attending awareness sessions and the number of learning needs surveyed/assessed.

Table 3.2 Outputs achieved by ULF 4 projects	
Outputs	**Year 4**
Number of learners	
Learners	13,043
Learning reps	1,287
Number attending awareness sessions	36,458
Number of learning representatives on training courses	1,540
Number achieving qualifications (learners and ULRs)	6,284
Number of accredited courses developed/customised	402
Number of other materials developed	167
Number of employers directly involved	1,192
Number of learning centers established/developed	66
Number of ILAs opened	5,485
ILAs used (where known)	1,978
Number of learning needs surveyed/assessed	25,213

3.8 **It would appear that interpretation of the indicators varies and so again, caution should be exercised in the use of the reported figures, particularly in relation to the number attending awareness sessions and the number of learning needs surveyed/assessed.** However, clarification of some of the definitions, is as follows:

- 'number of people having their learning needs surveyed/assessed' includes those that have taken part in a general learning needs survey and those, such as basic skills learners, that have had a formal assessment of their learning need;

- 'number of people attending awareness sessions about the project' only includes the number of people that have attended an awareness session;

- ILA 'opened' refers to an ILA account opened by individuals. The numbers reported by some projects will be an approximation of the number of ILAs opened, but cannot be truly reported as the exact number: ULF project workers help individuals access ILAs by getting application forms and advising on courses etc, but they do not open the account on behalf of the individual. Furthermore the extent to which an ILA has been used to pay for a course within the lifetime of the project will not be monitored by most projects, except in a small number of cases where the union is registered as an 'ILA provider';

- 'number of accredited courses developed or customised' refers, in a small number of cases, to new qualifications developed. In most instances, however, this measure refers to the development of existing courses, customised to contextualise materials for specific groups of learners.

- number of other materials developed refers to materials such as guidance materials, handbooks etc.

3.9 There is a wide range of additional outputs achieved by the ULF projects. **Table 3.3** presents a selection of these outputs reported by unions that did not fit within the standard set of output measures. These quotes are taken directly from the questionnaire return. The range of outputs described demonstrate that ULF projects deliver both learning activities and activities that build infrastructure and capacity to support lifelong learning.

Table 3.3 **Additional Outputs reported by ULF 4 Project Managers**
"Raised awareness of IT literacy".
"90% increase in job vacancies filled".
"42 courses have been organised at 23 different college venues across all regions of England. Majority of participants report that the course is relevant to them, increasing their confidence and skills in ICT".
"Project helped prepare the ground for other work funded by UK online, NHS Executive, Kent LSC. The project helped fund development of pilot workplace diploma in social work at Medway Council".
"Basic skills strategy developed for BS tutors, managers and reps".
"Development of regional trade union structures to ensure participation in NHS learning accounts scheme".
"2 learning partnerships agreements close to conclusion with 2 major employers. Conference/seminars for employers planned on work place basic skills".
"The pilot project enabled us to develop on-line pre-course assessment, on-line material and on-line course evaluation".
"Learning representatives training together and representing all, irrespective of trade union. The development of a company template for the establishment of learning reps - via work".
"Agreement to roll-out project to other sites. Seconding of learning reps full-time to co-ordinate work".

> *"Through the learner reps contributions to build capacity within the basic skills field are currently in operation. Time release for employees with basic skills needs".*
>
> *"Working very much in partnership with many employers. Identified quality provision in basic skills across the branch."*

Achievement of Targets

3.10 Target information on each of the 107 projects, to which the questionnaire was sent, was outlined in the bidding documents. The number of projects targeting each output is outlined in **Table 3.4** together with the number of projects that reported an outcome against the target. The questionnaire returns, of which there were 66, provided information on actual outputs achieved. **Table 3.4** presents the number of projects from the questionnaire returns that set targets against each output and the number of projects that achieved their targets.

Table 3.4 Number of ULF 4 projects targeting each of the outputs and the number of projects achieving their targets

Output	Number of projects targeting the output (n=107)	Number of projects achieving their target (n=66)
Number of learners starting courses	63	18
Number of people attending awareness sessions	11	6
Number of learners achieving qualifications	26	1
Number of qualifications developed	16	6
Number of other courses developed/customised	12	3
Number of employers involved	18	6
Number of learning centres developed/established	16	2
Number of ILAs opened	20	7
Number of learning needs surveyed/assessed	10	7

3.11 Note that whilst for example 16 projects targeted the development/establishment of learning centres only 2 projects that set a target against this indicator achieved it. However, several additional projects reported an outcome against this indicator, but did not set a target.

3.12 In Year 4, some targets have been exceeded by a considerable margin, including:

- number of learners achieving qualifications (target 4,303, actual 5,550 – 29% over target);

- number of learning centres developed/established[6] (target 48, actual 66 – 38% over target);

- number of training needs analyses undertaken (target 830, actual 25,213) – 36 projects reported a cumulative output of 21,011 but set no targets against this indicator;

- number of people attending awareness sessions (target 2,227, actual 36,458) – 44 projects reported a total of 33,765 people attending awareness sessions, but set no target against this indicator;

- number of ILAs opened (target 3,510, actual 5,485 – 56% over target).

3.13 Targets for the training of learning representatives were not set as training for learning representatives is now supported by mainstream funding.

3.14 Recognising that returns were made some time before the end of the project year, there is still some way to go for the achievement of individual project's targets, although several of the aggregate targets were achieved. Even allowing for the fact that returns were made before the year end, the shortfall on some of the targets was considerable and they were unlikely to be achieved. This suggests that:

- project management techniques within the unions still need to be improved; or,

- projects need to develop better monitoring techniques; or,

- projects need to set more realistic targets; or,

- projects need to plan delivery better to avoid the need for a late 'rush' of activity to meet target deadlines.

3.15 In reality, a combination of these problems is likely to apply and unions may need some support to overcome them.

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[6] Installation of new centres or enhancement of existing provision

Outputs per Project

3.16 Output per project[7] provides an indicator of the extent to which capacity has developed, through learning lessons from previous years and in delivering projects more efficiently.

3.17 In a number of key areas, the Year 4 projects have made substantial gains over previous years:

- the number of learners;
- number of people attending awareness sessions;
- number of learners achieving qualifications;
- number of accredited courses developed / customised;
- number of ILAs opened;
- number of training needs analyses.

3.18 The output per project has increased in every category since Year 3, as demonstrated by **Table 3.5.** The higher outputs per project reported in the table could be related to the increase in levered in funding.

3.19 Overall there has been a higher number of ULRs trained, but the average number of ULRs trained per project has remained relatively static. This could be due to the continued problem of securing release for ULRs.

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[7] The calculation of a particular output per project includes only projects that have outcomes against this measure.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="5">Table 3.5:
Average Outputs per Project</th></tr>
<tr><th>Outputs</th><th>Year 1
No.</th><th>Year 2
No.</th><th>Year 3
No.</th><th>Year 4
No.</th></tr>
<tr><td>Number of learners</td><td>114</td><td>124</td><td>128</td><td>261</td></tr>
<tr><td>Number attending awareness sessions</td><td>301</td><td>429</td><td>299</td><td>701</td></tr>
<tr><td>Number of learning representatives trained</td><td>46</td><td>29</td><td>27</td><td>28</td></tr>
<tr><td>Number achieving qualifications</td><td>55</td><td>44</td><td>114</td><td>191</td></tr>
<tr><td>Number of accredited courses developed/customised</td><td>2</td><td>5</td><td>2</td><td>14</td></tr>
<tr><td>Number of other materials developed</td><td>4</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>7</td></tr>
<tr><td>Number of employers involved</td><td>29</td><td>13</td><td>19</td><td>25</td></tr>
<tr><td>Number of learning centres established/developed</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>3</td></tr>
<tr><td>Number of ILAs taken-up</td><td>244</td><td>160</td><td>120</td><td>229</td></tr>
<tr><td>Number of learning needs analyses</td><td>280</td><td>152</td><td>136</td><td>586</td></tr>
</table>

Costs per Output

3.20 Cost per output measures the efficiency of projects to deliver a single output[8]. It is expected that cost per output would fall as the capacity to deliver increases. **Table 3.6** shows the analysis of cost per output achieved by the ULF projects in Years 1 to 4 and clearly demonstrates the significant fall in cost per unit across the key indicators, particularly in relation to learners enrolling, learners achieving qualifications and the number of employers directly involved in projects. This pattern suggests that unions are building on the groundwork undertaken in earlier funding rounds to roll-out larger scale projects using the knowledge, expertise and access to other resources they have gained.

3.21 Each year the costs per output for each of the different output measures have fallen and in ULF Year 4 this trend has continued. However, some of the costs per output should be treated with caution, in particular the cost per output of accredited courses developed (which included some high numbers that did not appear realistic) and the cost per output of employers directly involved. As mentioned previously the definition of recording employers being directly involved is not consistently applied.

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[8] The calculation of cost per output only includes projects that have a target or report outcomes against a specific measure. However, it does not attempt to apportion the project's funding across its targets.

Table 3.6: Cost per Output				
Outputs	Year 1 (£)	Year 2 (£)	Year 3 (£)	Year 4 (£)
Number of learners enrolling	£1,614	£803	£329	£181
Number attending awareness sessions	£675	£238	£131	£65
Number of learning representatives trained	£1,941	£2,187	£1,566	£1,658
Number achieving qualifications	£4,304	£2,707	£361	£225
Number of accredited courses developed/customised	£32,636	£26,995	£20,667	£3,652
Number of other materials developed	£24,283	£26,154	£13,646	£7,155
Number of employers directly involved	£11,341	£16,265	£2,190	£1,723
Number of learning centres established/developed	£38,910	£31,984	£23,108	£16,202
Number of ILAs taken-up	£207	£894	£480	£176
Number of learning needs analyses	£345	£633	£295	£75

3.22 During follow-up phone calls with the project managers it became apparent that there is inconsistency in their understanding of what is to be recorded in some of the output measures. This was particularly the case in training needs analyses and number of accredited courses developed. **Therefore the figures in table 3.5 and 3.6 should be treated with caution.** The collection of management information needs to be adapted to simplify the process of collection and to ensure everyone is measuring the same outputs in a consistent manner.

Barriers to Achieving Targets

3.23 Based on the evaluation of union learning funds in Scotland and Wales, and on previous evaluations of ULF a list of the potential key difficulties/barriers were identified as:

- difficulties in opening or using ILAs to fund courses;
- over ambitious targets;
- lack of support from employers;
- lack of interest from learners;
- difficulty in arranging/getting access to courses;
- lack of support from others in the union;
- delays in material/resource development.

3.24 Project managers were asked to report, in the questionnaire returns, if any of the barriers identified hindered their projects and if any additional barriers were encountered. **Figure 3.2** outlines the key barriers identified. Nearly 95% (63/66) of the projects that returned the questionnaire identified at least one barrier to the achievement of targets.

Figure 3.1 - Barriers to Achieving Targets
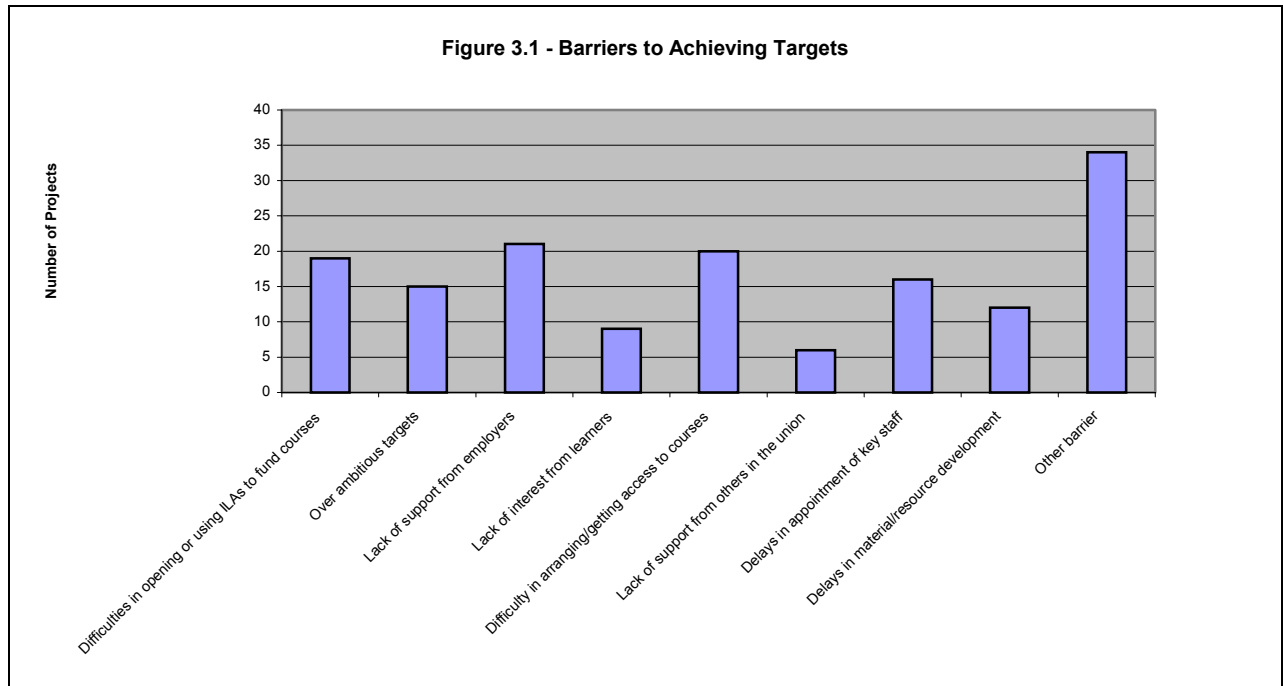
3.25 Two project managers noted:

- "Lack of company commitment: it is very hard to get much enthusiasm or activity from smallish private sector companies. They say they cannot afford to release people for training and don't believe that setting up a long term strategy will be of benefit to the company".

- "Whilst support from some employers has been extremely positive, the majority are still not convinced of the benefits which learning brings".

3.26 Securing release for learning representatives continues to be an issue for projects, indicating the continued need for projects to promote the business benefits of ULRs to employers. The other main barriers faced in project delivery have been:

- suspension of ILAs – creating funding problems;

- difficulties in recruiting project managers and project managers being spread too thinly;

- difficulties in arranging/getting access to courses.

3.27 Delays in appointing key staff have been a problem in ULF Year 4. This includes delays/difficulties in recruiting project managers, training managers and learning representatives. This problem was clearly identified by the questionnaire returns with project managers quoting the following:

- "Despite enormous efforts to recruit, the response to learning reps courses in the regions has been very disappointing".

- "One project worker spread too thinly".

- "Because of the project manager's change of employment in March 2001, a new project manager was not able to undertake all responsibilities until July 2001. Momentum was lost".

3.28 Other barriers identified that were specified by individual projects include:

- "Shift working is one of the biggest problems for organising training for our members and the "sometimes" inflexibility of FE providers".

- "Redundancies - centre is being used to give IAG to redundant workers".

- "Gender issues - as many midwives are not only full time employees, but also lead courses and lead parents - they found it difficult to access courses and fit in work schedule".

3.29 In the autumn of 2001, ILAs were suspended and then withdrawn. On the whole, the impact of the suspension of ILAs was on individual learners as opposed to the ULF projects, although it did have a significant impact on projects that included the delivery of learning. In addition, ILAs were used as a promotional tool to promote learning and thus the suspension had a significant impact on the learning representative who used it to promote learning. Many of the projects identified concerns for the future development of their projects, commenting that with the suspension of ILAs, funding of individual learners may prove difficult. **Table 3.7** reports some of the responses to the impact of ILA suspension as quoted in the project questionnaire returns.

Table 3.7:
Impact of ILA Suspension

"We were going to use them as a major part of promoting the learner rep initiative with members and employers".

"Not our project but associate courses: ILAs were to be used by members once they had had advice and guidance sessions".

"No direct impact as our project sought to use ILAs for future courses. However, we anticipate that many workers will be unable to continue with their learning due to the ending of ILAs".

"One of the many aims of this project was to publicise and promote ILAs through learning reps".

"Yes, problems for motivation by ULRs".

"Direct Impact: Unable to fund learning identified through analysis and taster sessions. Has delayed course start dates by approx. 3 months".

"Direct impact on project due to lack of funding reducing the learning opportunities available to learners".

"As this has been a development programme as yet there has been no impact - but it will influence how we proceed with delivery."

Impact of ULF Year 4 Projects

3.30 Whilst quantifiable outcomes can be measured and recorded as a means of identifying impact, there are a number of other impacts that have been achieved by the ULF that cannot be measured. Such qualitative measures are soft indicators of the impact and can be used to measure the distance travelled by the unions and by the learners and other beneficiaries.

3.31 Measuring impact on learners is beyond the scope of this evaluation. However, presented in **Table 3.8** are some quotes from the questionnaire returns about the impact of ULF projects as quoted by the project managers. Chapter 4 presents the results of an employer survey, which attempted to reflect the impact of ULF projects on employers and Chapter 5 considers the feasibility of developing a model to measure the hard impacts of ULF projects on employers.

Table 3.8 **Impact of ULF 4 Projects as quoted by ULF project managers**
"ASLEF has seconded a member of staff to become the project worker. Life Long Learning has become a central feature of the Unions educational policy and impacted on all training initiatives. TSSA now has a member of staff responsible for Lifelong Learning and project management". *"It has brought the issue of Lifelong Learning to the forefront and made us aware of the basic and key skills problem within our industry".* *"Massive impact on members, built confidence, people moving from successful completion of Basic Skills to Key Skills etc. Changed peoples thinking regarding education and training".* *"The impact for Equity members has been to improve employability and provide up to minute vocational training, for learners and the learning provider".* *"Project has really helped in encouraging other branches in GPMU to embrace the training agenda. This year many branches we have worked with are putting ULF bids in and the union is now thinking much more strategically on training".* *"It brought the learning and skills agenda to the notice of those who were not aware of it".* *"The project has been influential in developing a learning culture within unions that is beginning to be embedded in trade union structures in some areas".* *"UCATT has adopted a Lifelong Learning strategy and the ULF work is embedded at all levels and supported nationally and regionally".* *"The project has helped develop strong local networks which help facilitate and support local activity. More and better contact with providers and funding bodies has resulted as well as greater awareness within lay structures and regional staff".*

3.32 The comments presented in the table suggest that unions are starting to develop long term capacity and that structures are developing within at least some of the unions to support lifelong learning. Some of the larger unions are starting to think more strategically about their role in the lifelong learning agenda. One of the most frequent comments was the development of good partnership working with providers and other partners.

3.33 However, the table is merely a first indication of impact in terms of sustainability and capacity building: a more thorough investigation would be required before any firm conclusions can be drawn.

4   A SURVEY OF EMPLOYER INVOLVEMENT WITH ULF

The Collection of Employer Details

Rationale

4.1   The Union Learning Fund is intended as a policy vehicle through which the Government will address the wider workforce development strategy of improving overall educational achievement, the level of skills of the workforce (thus improving productivity and competitiveness) and encouraging social inclusion. As the funding available through the ULF has grown and the nature of the fund has moved away from experimental pilot type projects, DfES has become increasingly aware of the need to establish the impact of the activities undertaken. The impact on employers, where they have been involved in projects[9], is a particular area of interest for this Round 4 evaluation. There has been considerable anecdotal evidence of impact in previous evaluations but it is felt that a more robust and quantified base of evidence is required.

4.2   ULF projects prior to Round 4 have identified involvement from around 1,700 employers but little is known about the nature of involvement or the effect that involvement has had on this group. The aim of Strand 2 of this year's evaluation was to work with the ULF projects funded through Rounds 2 and 3 to secure contact details for as many employers as possible, with a view to identifying a sample for analysis.

4.3   This section sets out the results of the work programme undertaken through Strand 2, and goes on to describe the findings of Strand 3 - the telephone survey carried out with the employers identified from the collection of details.

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[9] It is recognised that employers are not a defined target for the fund but impact on this group is still seen by the Department as an important focus for ULF activities.

Methodology for Collection of Contact Details

4.4 Based on reports of 1,730 employers[10] being involved in ULF projects in Years 2 and 3, DfES set a target for York Consulting to gather details for a minimum of 900 employers (52%), in recognition of likely duplication arising from year on year reports and from employers being involved in more than one project and with more than one union. From this, a sample reflecting the diversity of sectors, geographic spread, project aims and activities was to be constructed. The aim of 300 employers completing a telephone survey (representing 33% of the target sample or 17% of the reported population) was felt reasonable.

4.5 To gather details from which to draw a sample for a telephone survey, a postal survey (Appendix A) was distributed to the contract holders for all projects from Rounds 2 and 3. A total of 127 questionnaires were sent out.

4.6 The questionnaire invited unions to provide a range of information about employer involvement in their ULF projects:

- whether or not the project had involved any employers;

- the number of employers that were actively involved – this was defined as taking part in the project, providing project management input, providing resources and facilities, promoting the project or providing release for employees;

- the number of employers who had been partially involved – this was defined as being aware and supportive of the project, but not actively involved;

- the status of learning agreements within these employers;

- contact details and some information about the workplace for each of the employers actively involved in the project.

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[10] Reported in the Year 2 and Year 3 project surveys.

4.7 All non-respondents were followed up by telephone by the York Consulting and TUC Learning Services teams, in attempt to boost the level of response. The poor response to the survey, which we will discuss in more detail later in the section, necessitated an addition to the methodology. In an attempt to boost the number of employer details available, the York Consulting team undertook an examination of the project files held by DfES to look at:

- original bids;
- meeting minutes;
- project evaluations;
- final reports.

4.8 This helped to identify a number of further possible contacts. In addition, it was decided to include employers identified by Year 4 projects (a request for similar information was included in the project survey), recognising that many of these employers may only be newly involved and that the nature of benefits or impact may consequently be limited.

Results of the Postal Survey

4.9 The response rate from project managers, at a little over half (70 returns were received, approximately 55%) was disappointing. Considering that over the life of ULF, projects have reported involvement of over 1,700 employers, it was also disappointing that the number of employers identified through the postal survey was:

- 106 employers;
- 140 individual contacts. (for example where more than one person per employer has been involved, eg both Human Resources and Operations Management, or where a project has taken in more than one site)

4.10 As described above, York Consuting and DfES undertook further work, which raised these numbers to 244 employers identified from individual ULF projects. When these employers were further reviewed to eliminate duplication (for example, where one named employer organisation was involved in more than one ULF project), the total number of potential employers recorded was 195. A total of 256 named individuals were identified in these 195 employer organisations, reflecting the fact that in some cases more than one person has been involved

Reasons for Low Returns

4.11 As we have indicated above, the number of contacts identified through this process was very much lower than anticipated. Our discussions with project managers and others during this process identified a variety of possible causes of the low response:

- the target this year was to reach employers who were more than just aware and supportive of the project. We were seeking to find those that had been actively involved in the operation and management of projects. This is not a distinction that has been made in the past during the collection of performance information. The effect of this can at least partly be seen if you compare the total number of employers identified by respondents (435)[11] compared to the number directly involved (106);

- a number of project managers commented that they have never kept records of the employers involved in their projects as it has not been required in the past. Consequently, they have only been able to provide limited details;

- a number of unions mentioned, particularly in relation to early Round 2 projects, that the staff who had been involved in these projects have now moved on and with them knowledge of some of the operational details of the projects, such as the contact details of those involved has been lost;

- the file check, undertaken by York Consulting, suggests that a significant number of employers' involvement in the projects never goes beyond writing letters of support for bids and consequently the numbers described as actively involved by unions is lower than originally reported;

- the files held at DfES were understood to contain copies of evaluation reports, steering group minutes and other key documents in addition to the original bids and contract documents. A great many files for completed projects did not appear to hold such documents. This clearly limited the scope for a retrospective search for information.

4.12 This exercise highlights the need for review and improvement to the management of information in projects and the long-term recording of important data in both participating unions and the Department.

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[11] Taken from data on Year 2 and Year 3 surveys

The Employer Survey

Scope

4.13 The telephone survey of employers (Appendix B) was designed to capture information relating to:

- the length of involvement with ULF projects;
- ways in which the organisation has been involved in ULF projects;
- resources in place prior to involvement;
- reasons for supporting ULF projects;
- benefits of being involved in ULF projects;
- results of getting involved.

Refining the Sample

4.14 A contact list of 256 individuals was gathered, of which 61 were secondary contacts in the employers identified (for example, where an employer had been involved in more than one project or workplace and where it was possible to distinguish between managers involved in operational duties as opposed to human resource management). A possible total of 195 'primary' contacts in employers were available to the surveyors.

4.15 As the sample was considerably smaller than intended it was decided to contact all possible respondents. From the 256 records, it was not possible to trace a telephone number for 29, and in a further 54 cases the number provided was wrong or unobtainable. 13 potential respondents refused the opportunity to contribute and a further 31 were not available within the fieldwork period. Twelve respondents claimed to know nothing about the Union Learning Fund or the project from which their details had been identified. Secondary contacts were only used where the primary contact was not available.

4.16 The response rate (interviews completed as a proportion of interviews plus refusals) was 88% and the overall 'strike' rate (interviews as a proportion of all outcomes) was 40%. In total, 94 interviews were completed. Therefore, it was disappointing that the overall sample of employers was considerably smaller than the initial records indicated was possible.

Results of the Employer Survey

Background of Respondents

4.17 The following tables describe the responses to questions raised in the telephone survey. Of the 94 respondents, 48 came from private sector employers, 43 from public sector employers and 3 described their organisation as both public and private, i.e. there was some private or commercial activity in conjunction with a public sector organisation.

4.18 Respondents represented three main categories of management:

- 59 (62%) worked in human resources, education or training management;

- 28 (30%) worked in an operational capacity such as director of manufacturing, works manager, manufacturing manager or catering manager;

- 4 respondents described themselves as Managing Director or Group/General Manager;

- 3 had other functions such as Development Consultant.

4.19 In addition to the TUC itself (which accounted for 9% of respondents), those surveyed had worked with a total of 24 trade unions on ULF projects. **Table 4.1** shows those unions reported by 5% or more of respondents.

Table 4.1 Trade Unions worked with on ULF projects (5% or more of respondents) N=94					
	Total		**Private Sector**	**Public Sector**	**Private and Public sectors**
Union	**Yes**	**%**			
UNISON	28	30	3	24	1
GMB	18	19	5	12	1
TGWU	16	17	8	7	1
AEEU	11	12	7	4	-
TUC	8	9	6	2	-
CATU	7	7	6	1	-
GPMU	7	7	6	1	-
MSF	5	5	1	4	-
USDAW	5	5	5	-	-

4.20 Respondents therefore represented a reasonable cross-section between public and private sectors and had contact with a wide and representative number of trade unions that have been involved in ULF.

Employer Involvement in Learning Activity

4.21 Respondents were asked how long they had been involved with ULF projects. **Table 4.2** shows the length of involvement and whether the organisation is still involved in the ULF related activity.

Table 4.2 Length of time involved/whether still involved in Learning Activities (figures in %)				
	Total	**Still involved**	**Not involved**	**Project ceased**
Total (n)	94	83	1	14
< 6 months	15	10	-	36
6 mnths – 1 yr	29	27	-	36
> 1 yr, < 2yrs	16	17	1	2
2 yrs or more	39	46	-	1
Don't know	1	-	-	1

4.22 These responses indicate a reasonable balance between current and long-standing projects. Almost 15% of respondents had been involved in projects that are no longer operating. The fact that the majority of respondents had been involved for two years or more helps to substantiate the later questions about the benefits gained from involvement as it is more likely that benefits would be apparent (or that there had been no benefits) after a longer period.

4.23 Respondents were asked to describe the types of learning activities they had been involved with. In total 49 different types of activity were mentioned in this unprompted question, of which 39 were mentioned only once or twice. The 'top ten' responses were:

- Basic skills (33%);
- Union Learning Representatives (17%);
- Computer Literacy (10%);
- Basic IT (10%);
- Learning Centre (10%);
- Return to learn (7%);
- Health and safety (6%);
- Pathway to lifelong learning (4%);
- Joint projects with union (4%);
- ESOL courses (4%).

Reasons for Supporting ULF Projects

4.24 Employers were then asked to give their reasons for supporting the ULF activities: again, no prompts were given. A total of 25 different responses were received, of which 14 were given by 5% or more of respondents. These were:

- to have a more confident/enthusiastic workforce (26%);

- to have a workforce that is more receptive to training (21%);

- to improve workforce skills in general (18%);

- to improve workforce IT skills (15%);

- to have a workforce with more of the skills necessary for promotion (15%);

- to improve workforce numeracy skills (14%);

- to improve workforce literacy skills (14%);

- for better internal communication (11%);

- for better industrial relations (10%);

- to raise employees' awareness of the benefits of lifelong learning (10%);

- for greater workforce productivity (6%);

- at the request of the trade union (6%);

- to achieve a reduction in staff turnover (5%);

- to improve workforce morale (5%).

4.25 This sample of employers was willing to be involved in ULF activities – learning activities led by trade unions – to try and foster relationships with workers and the unions and to gain a workforce that is more willing to participate in learning/training. Where 'harder' gains were mentioned, it was only by a few contributors, for example issues such as productivity were not ranked highly. It is clear from this sample that the motivation for employer involvement in ULF projects is focused much more on 'softer' relationship aspects than on the expectation of 'hard' economic benefits.

4.26 To understand better the context in which employers decided to be involved in trade union led learning activity through ULF, we asked about the extent to which the ULF activities were linked to other activities such as Investors in People, appraisals or performance reviews and the provision of training. **Table 4.3** describes the responses to these questions.

Table 4.3 Linkage of Union Led Learning Activities to other workplace initiatives (N=94, figures in %)				
	Investors in People	**Appraisal/ Performance Review**	**Internal Training Provision**	**External Training Provision**
Strongly Linked	18	18	30	13
Linked a bit	29	31	41	40
Not linked at all	45	43	26	41
Don't know	1		1	3
Not applicable	7	8	2	2

4.27 Opinion on this area of linkages would appear to be mixed, with the exception of internal training provision where a stronger link was felt to exist.

Involvement with the Union Learning Fund

4.28 Employers were invited to describe the ways in which they had been involved in the ULF activity. Again, responses were unprompted and more than one response was given in most cases. Of the 34 different types of response received, 12 were given by 5% or more of respondents. These were:

- gave access to rooms/equipment for activities (34%);
- helped in marketing/promotion of activities (26%);
- gave employees paid time off to do Basic Skills learning (26%);
- gave employees paid time off to do other learning (16%);
- developed learning centre in partnership with union (10%);
- gave learning reps paid time off to carry out duties (10%);
- gave union members paid time off to train as learning reps (9%);
- in partnership with the union (6%);
- holding seminars/workshops (6%);
- learning reps on site/in area (6%);
- paid for job related courses identified by the union (5%);
- funding (5%).

4.29 In addition, 4% of respondents reported giving paid time off for employees to meet with learning reps.

4.30 There was little variation between the types of involvement in different sectors: employers appear to be asked for, or to offer, similar types of support. **Only 3% of respondents stated that they had not been directly involved in resourcing projects** and that the union(s) had paid for and resourced all activities.

4.31 The survey attempted to take employers through the issues and opportunities that prompted their involvement before asking about the benefits they felt they had gained. We asked about the resources and schemes that had been in place to support learning and training prior to involvement in ULF. **Table 4.4** describes the key responses: once again, there was little difference between public and private sectors but some interesting variations emerge between those employers who are still involved in the ULF related activities when compared with those where the activities have ceased.

4.32 Those projects that are still running showed several key features (as reported by employers):

- more had learning reps in place prior to the project starting;

- more reported that they had some provision to address basic skills needs;

- more reported having a training budget in place;

- more reported having an existing policy on lifelong learning.

4.33 These differences may be due to the operation of sequential ULF projects helping to build an overall momentum: it is not clear whether respondents were recalling the situation prior to any ULF activity (unlikely in the case of having ULRs in place) or before the most recent project.

Table 4.4 **Learning Schemes and Resources in place prior to Involvement in ULF** (figures in %)			
	Total Respondents n=94	**Org still involved n=78**	**Activity not in operation n=14**
Training budget	80	85	64
Human resource specialists and/or internal training team	79	79	79
Organisation training plan	79	82	71
Employee appraisal scheme	73	78	57
Funding of external vocational educ/training delivered 'in house'	73	77	64
A recognition of your workforce's basic skills needs	67	71	57
Funding of external vocational educ/training delivered 'off-site'	66	72	43
Provision to address your workforce's basic skills needs	65	71	43
Investor in People	57	58	57
An IT centre and/or learning centre	53	55	43
A policy on lifelong learning	50	55	29
Union Learning Reps	46	53	14
Funding of external non-vocational educ/training delivered 'off-site'	43	46	29
Funding of external non-vocational educ/training delivered 'in house'	40	42	36

Involvement of Staff in ULF Projects

4.34 Respondents were then asked to state whether senior managers, other line managers, HR staff and union learning representatives were involved in the projects funded by ULF. **Table 4.5** shows the extent of involvement. There was little variation in response between the different sectors, with the exception of the involvement of HR staff when participation was significantly higher amongst public sector employers (72% compared with 48% of private sector organisations).

Table 4.5 Involvement of Managers and Learning Reps in ULF Projects (N=94, figures in %)				
	Senior Managers	**Line Managers**	**HR Managers**	**Union Learning Reps**
Yes	45	65	59	79
No	54	34	40	17
Don't know	1	1	1	4

4.35 It is worth noting that line managers appear to be involved more frequently than both senior managers and HR managers, although the level of involvement of senior managers is considerable. It is not clear whether the involvement of learning reps is based on their participation from the inception of projects (i.e. if the rep is partly responsible for the generation of the project) or if they became involved as part of the project (a significant number of ULF projects have included the support and training of learning reps).

4.36 One of the key aims of many ULF projects has been to widen opportunities for participation in learning amongst those whose working conditions restrict their chances. In particular, this includes shift workers and those on temporary or part time contracts and agency workers who may not be given access to provision available to 'core' staff. The survey asked employers to indicate if, in their view, staff working in various shift/contract arrangements had been involved in projects funded by ULF. **Table 4.6** describes their responses. There was little variation in the responses from different sectors.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3" align="center">Table 4.6
Participation amongst shift workers and temporary staff
(N=94, figures in %)</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td align="center">Shift workers</td><td align="center">Temporary and/or agency workers</td></tr>
<tr><td>Yes</td><td align="right">69</td><td align="right">24</td></tr>
<tr><td>No</td><td align="right">23</td><td align="right">64</td></tr>
<tr><td>Don't know</td><td align="right">6</td><td align="right">9</td></tr>
<tr><td>Refused</td><td align="right">1</td><td align="right">1</td></tr>
</table>

Employer Benefits from Involvement with Union Led Learning Activities Funded through ULF

4.37   The main purpose of the survey was to increase understanding as to whether employers have felt that they benefit from their involvement in ULF projects. Responses to this area of questioning were again unprompted.   The responses are described in **Table 4.7**. In total 20 different responses were given, the top twelve of which received 5% or more mentions by respondents.

Table 4.7 Benefits of involvement with ULF funded activities (figures in %)				
	Total n=94	**Private sector n=48**	**Public Sector n=43**	**Public and Private sector n=3**
More confident/enthusiastic workforce	37	35	40	33
Workforce more receptive to training	22	17	26	67
Workforce with more of the skills necessary for promotion	19	15	23	33
Better internal communications	18	15	19	67
Improved workforce IT skills	16	21	12	-
Raised employee's awareness of the benefits of lifelong learning	15	13	19	-
Better industrial relations	13	8	16	33
Greater workforce productivity	11	4	19	-
Improved workforce morale	11	10	12	-
Improved workforce literacy skills	10	13	7	-
Improved workforce numeracy skills	9	10	7	-
Reduced staff turnover	5	4	7	-

4.38 The responses focus mainly on softer aspects of confidence, improved relations and communications, although more respondents highlighted improved productivity than had indicated this as an expected benefit. Only 2 respondents mentioned greater profitability as a benefit, both of which were public sector employers. This may have been a different way of stating increased productivity. 13% of respondents did not identify any benefits and a further 7% said it was too early to say.

4.39 Having stated the benefits they had seen from involvement in ULF, respondents were then asked about the **methods they had used to assess these benefits.** 75 respondents were asked this question, of which 8% stated that they hadn't as yet used any particular method and a further 4% didn't know what methods had been used. The 'top ten' methods described were:

- talking to people (31%);
- observation – seeing them become more confident/able (25%);
- evaluation forms (15%);
- feedback from co-ordinators (9%);
- reports from line managers (8%);
- part of normal staff assessment (5%);
- filled in feedback form (5%);
- setting targets (4%);
- surveys (4%);
- test at end of course (4%).

4.40 Therefore, although some more rigorous methods appear to be used, the main approach to assessing benefits from involvement in union led learning activity appear to be subjective and personal in nature: observation and conversation. This does not mean that the benefits have not been real, rather that **there is little consistent 'scientific' approach to measuring benefits from these activities**.

Sustainability of Learning Activity

4.41 Respondents were asked to comment on the extent to which activities would be likely to continue and their intentions to remain involved in union led learning activities through ULF. **Table 4.8** shows the extent to which respondents thought that *"the activities have been successful but are unlikely to continue"*. There was little difference in perspective between private and public sector employers.

Table 4.8 Likely continuation of successful activities (figures in %)				
Question: Comment on the extent of agreement: "the activities have been successful but are UNLIKELY to continue".	**Total n=94**	**Private sector n=48**	**Public sector n=43**	**Private and public n=3**
Agree strongly	9	8	9	-
Tend to agree	4	4	5	-
Neutral	12	13	12	-
Tend to disagree	27	33	19	33
Disagree strongly	46	40	51	67
Don't know	3	2	5	-

4.42 Clearly, respondents feel that activities are likely to continue. The response to this question was even stronger amongst those that had continued to be involved in projects over a longer period, with the percentage that "*disagreed strongly*" rising to 50%. Public sector employers were also more likely to disagree that projects were unlikely to continue.

4.43 We also asked respondents the extent to which they would like to continue to be involved. **Table 4.9** shows the response to this statement, in which there was little variation between sectors.

Table 4.9 Continued involvement with union learning activities		
Question: extent of agreement with the statement "we would like to continue to be involved with Union Learning Activities".	**% response (all respondents) n=94**	**% response (organisation still involved) n=78**
Agree strongly	69	76
Tend to agree	27	22
Neutral	3	1
Tend to disagree	-	-
Disagree strongly	-	-
Don't know	1	1

4.44 The level of interest/commitment to remaining involved is very high, with 96% agreeing or agreeing strongly that they would like to continue to be involved. Those who were still involved with the ULF projects took a stronger position, with 98% wanting to continue their involvement. It is notable that of those whose project had ceased, 73% still wanted to be involved with union learning activities. This would indicate that, whatever the reason for previous activities having stopped, interest and possibly commitment remained high amongst employers.

4.45 One of the main objectives of the ULF is to encourage and enable individuals to take up learning opportunities with the support of trade unions. For most projects the focus of activity has been at the workplace, but it has not been an explicit condition of ULF that the organisations need benefit directly (though clearly this would be expected or at least hoped for).

4.46 Employers were asked whether they felt that the activities had been of benefit to individuals but of little benefit to the organisation. Response to this question was more divided than the previous questions, but the majority still felt that there had been benefits to the organisations as well as to individuals, with the largest group of respondents (34%) feeling strongly that this was the case. Public sector employers took a more definitive position again, with 40% disagreeing strongly that activities had been of little benefit to the organisation. **Table 4.10** outlines the overall responses.

Table 4.10 Activities have been of little benefit to the organisation (figures in %)					
Question: To what extent do you agree: "the activities have been of little benefit to the organisation but they have benefited the individuals taking part"?	**All respondents**	**Private sector**	**Public sector**	**Public and private**	**Org still involved**
Totals (n)	94	48	43	3	78
Agree strongly	7	8	7	-	8
Tend to agree	20	23	19	-	15
Neutral	10	10	9	-	12
Tend to disagree	23	29	16	33	23
Disagree strongly	34	27	40	67	37
Don't know	4	2	7	-	4
Refused	1	-	2	-	1

4.47 Release to undertake learning activities has been highlighted by some projects over the four years of ULF as a barrier to success. The issue of participation and benefits arising from paid or unpaid release is currently the focus of a number of pilot schemes being conducted by the Learning and Skills Council.

4.48 We asked employers to comment on the basis of giving release without distinguishing between paid and unpaid, though stressing that it was release from working time. A significant majority (84%) of respondents did not see the issue of release as a barrier and 60% of public sector employers felt strongly that this was not a difficulty. **Table 4.11** shows the responses.

Table 4.11 **Time off for learning activities** (figures in %)					
Question: To what extent do you agree: "we are unable to give employees time off for union learning activities"?	**All respondents**	**Private sector**	**Public sector**	**Public and private**	**Org still involved**
Totals (n)	94	48	43	3	78
Agree strongly	2	4	-	-	1
Tend to agree	5	4	7	-	5
Neutral	9	6	9	33	10
Tend to disagree	32	42	23	-	31
Disagree strongly	52	44	60	67	53

Additionality

4.49 The ULF is intended to be a catalyst in helping unions to develop their own capacity to support learning activities and to develop appropriate relationships with employers, providers and others to maintain any activity generated. We have seen that once employers have been involved in union led learning activities from which they have seen some benefits, they feel strongly that the activities are likely to continue.

4.50 We asked employers to comment further on the extent to which they felt that the activities in which they had been involved would not have taken place without the funding from ULF. **Table 4.12** shows the responses, which varied little between sectors.

Table 4.12 Activities would not take place without ULF support (figures in %)					
Question: To what extent do you agree: "the activities would not take place without funding from ULF"?	**All respondents**	**Private sector**	**Public sector**	**Public and private**	**Org still involved**
Totals (n)	94	48	43	3	78
Agree strongly	21	19	23	33	22
Tend to agree	41	42	40	67	45
Neutral	5	4	7	-	6
Tend to disagree	21	23	21	-	18
Disagree strongly	7	6	9	-	6
Don't know	3	6	-	-	3

4.51 While feeling on this question was weaker than on some other points, it is clear that a majority of employers (62%) feel that ULF funding has been important in generating the activities - with this proportion rising to 67% among those employers still involved. However, almost 30% of employers felt that ULF support had not necessarily been critical. It is not possible to comment on whether the activities would in fact have gone ahead without ULF funding.

Encouraging Employer Participation

4.52 Concluding the survey, we asked employers to comment on what they felt were the '*best and worst things*' resulting from their involvement. **Table 4.13** shows the top responses to each question. In the case of '*best things*', a total of 21 different responses were given of which seven were mentioned by more than 5% of respondents.

4.53 Some 52% of respondents felt that nothing in particular was negative, but 13% said the '*worst thing*' was the amount of time required/lost through participation. This reinforces the overall view from employers participating in the survey that ULF had been a positive and beneficial activity for them, with the '*best things*' being quite soft in nature, focusing on awareness, team building, confidence and helping industrial relations.

Table 4.13 Best and worst things resulting from involvement in ULF activities (N=94, figures in %)			
Best things resulting from organisation's involvement in union-led learning activities funded through ULF		**Worst things** resulting from organisation's involvement in union-led learning activities funded through ULF	
Activity	**% response**	**Activity**	**% response**
Helps industrial relations	20	Nothing in particular	52
Greater awareness of continuous development/ develop staff	19	Too much time involved, e.g. loss of productive time/ management time administering project	13
Gives people a chance to learn that they would normally not get	17	Lack of cooperation from unions	2
Motivates the workforce	15	Process of applying for funds is too long winded	2
Helps teamwork/ all working to the same end	7	-	
Creates a desire for people to learn	7	-	
Builds confidence	7	-	
Staff feel valued	4		
Improves skill of workforce	3		
Don't know	3	Don't know	5
12 other items scored 2% or less		21 other items scored 2% or less	

4.54 Finally, respondents were asked to comment on how employers could be encouraged to get involved with union led learning activities funded through ULF and on how the Fund could be improved. **Tables 4.14** and **4.15** describe the 'Top Five' responses to each question. A common feature of both answers was to improve promotion/awareness of the Fund to employers and to raise awareness of the benefits they had seen. On the other hand, almost half of respondents (46%) could not think of any particular improvement to the Fund.

Table 4.14		
'Top Five' Ways in which Employers could be encouraged to get involved with union-led learning activities funded through ULF		
Rank	**Comment**	**% response* (n=94)**
1	Improved marketing/promotion of the Fund	51
2	Promotion of benefits to employers from involvement	29
3	Involve people/companies who have experience of it	9
4	Improve partnerships with trade unions	7
5	Simplify access to funding	6
	Don't know	3
* As respondents were able to give more than one answer and more than 5 ways were mentioned, the total response is not 100%		

Table 4.15		
'Top Five' Suggested improvements to the ULF programme		
Rank	**Comment**	**% response* (n=94)**
1	None	46
2	Better communications/advertising	14
3	Should be resourced better	5
4	Lessen the paperwork/red tape	5
5=	Employers to be more involved/greater consultation re: timings, schedules etc	3
5=	Make it easier to get funding	3
	Don't know	4
* As respondents were able to give more than one answer and more than 5 improvements were mentioned, the total response is not 100%		

Conclusions

4.55 The trade unions were asked to supply contact details for employers they had previously reported as involved. Projects were not able to supply the anticipated data on sufficient numbers of employers to construct a reliable and robust sample for the survey. There are a number of factors which may explain this situation, including:

- the survey required participation of employers who had had an active involvement in the union led projects supported by ULF rather than a lower level of contact which may account for some of the employers reported previously;

- the Department had not indicated that this was an area of specific future interest to unions/projects, so there had been little incentive to keep full records;

- it has been reported in earlier evaluations that data gathering and recording of management information has been a common weakness of ULF projects.

4.56 However, the smaller sample seems representative of the profile of unions and sectors involved, though it has been difficult to control the sample for bias, which might be reflected in employers' willingness to take part in the survey.

4.57 In addition to human resource and training staff who might be considered more likely to be interested, ULF projects have involved a significant number of senior and line managers. Employers do not appear to have been motivated by achieving hard business/economic goals as a direct result of their involvement (such as an increase in profitability or productivity). They did realise their aims of improving industrial relations, increasing the propensity of the workforce to participate in learning/training and to increasing their core skills. Some commented on the costs they had faced in terms of release and management time required, but in general employers appear to be satisfied with the results of their involvement in ULF supported activities.

4.58 **As a result of the difficulties encountered obtaining a sample of employers to interview, it is likely that those that were interviewed were the more enthusiastic employers involved in ULF and so the findings should not be seen as representative of all employers' views.** The overall conclusion is that the employers surveyed have found their involvement in union-led learning supported through ULF to be beneficial and they are interested in maintaining their involvement and the activities supported into the future.

5 FEASIBILITY OPTIONS: ASSESSING ECONOMIC IMPACT

Introduction

5.1 Throughout this report we review and assess the outputs of ULF activity in terms of the project outcomes. These outcomes can be classified into three generic impact categories:

- impact on process, e.g. course design/relationship development;
- impact on individuals, e.g. attitude to learning/NVQ achievement;
- impact on employers, e.g. business benefits.

5.2 Whilst recognising that improving the skills of individuals is very important, so that they can make an effective contribution to the wider economy (by being more productive and by being flexible through developing transferable skills for example), in terms of demonstrating economic impact it is the employer or business benefits that are perhaps of greatest importance (and through which the individual's contribution is made). In this section we therefore focus on employer impacts and consider the extent to which ULF activity generates clear economic impacts on company performance. We explore ways in which this might be measured and assess aspects of feasibility.

5.3 Our primary purpose is to assess the feasibility of identifying economic benefits directly through employer/company benefits and impacts. While indirect economic benefits will derive from the impact on individuals supported through ULF activity, these are generally regarded as 'micro' influences. It is the wider 'macro' impacts that are perhaps most significant in demonstrating both the benefit to employers and the economic case.

5.4 We were initially sceptical from our knowledge of ULF activity to date on the applicability of an employment or business measure. We thought however that it would be useful to test formally how and whether it could be done. It was suggested that perhaps the closest approach to benchmark against was Investors in People (IiP). This is also a Human Resource/training/development style initiative where there has been some success in demonstrating causality from initiative-supported activity to company benefits.

5.5   We conclude that the IiP methodology, although potentially replicable to ULF, is not 'appropriate'. Having said that, it is important to recognise why this is the case. It has implications for future measurement and indeed for Fund activity. As a result, we have set out below aspects of the comparison in more detail than might be warranted given our ultimate conclusion.

5.6   Our analysis is presented under the following headings, each of which is considered in turn:

- Theoretical Analogy;
- ULF IiP Comparison;
- ULF Intermediate Impacts;
- Employer Experience;
- Conclusions.

Theoretical Analogy

5.7   Over the past few years there has been extensive econometric research to establish the relationship between Investors in People (IiP) achievement and company performance. The most recent piece of work was conducted by Warwick Business School in June 2002. We present this as a model approach, which might be replicated for ULF activity. In presenting this analogy, we refer to the general IiP approach, specifying the model conceptually, rather than the more rigorous econometric specification of the IiP literature. We are more interested in the applicability of the approach, rather than the technique of specification and measurement.

The IiP Employment Growth Model

5.8   The general proposition is that employers view IiP activity as a standard investment in a similar vein to any other company investment. On this basis, a company will make the decision to invest if the present value of the revenue stream over the period of investment exceeds the initial cost of the investment, i.e. the present value of the benefits exceeds the cost.

5.9 An important element of the investment decision is that of 'irreversibility'. This is the concept that once an investment is made, it cannot be reversed without incurring costs. In the Human Resources context, a proxy for irreversibility is financial investment. So, for example, in the IiP context, a company's decision to commit to Investors in People is not regarded as an investment as there is no financial outlay made. This notion of irreversibility linked to explicit financial investment made by employers is an important dimension to be considered later in the ULF context.

5.10 The general principle of the IiP employment model is that companies investing in the HR activities associated with achieving the IiP standard will have an added value impact on employment.

5.11 It is assumed that an employment comparison can be drawn between the performance of companies participating in/achieving IiP and those not. There are, however, potential bias issues here in the sense that IiP companies might be better managed, and hence perform better, irrespective of an HR IiP investment. It is therefore necessary to apply a random assignment of companies in the IiP and non-IiP comparison groups.

5.12 The indicator of economic performance chosen in this model is employment, or rather a change in employment. The model focuses on employment growth between IiP commitment and recognition and can be expressed as follows:

$$G(Iip) = \frac{Gr - Gc}{Tr - Tc}$$

5.13 G (Iip) is expected company benefits, which is measured as the average employment growth between IiP commitment and recognition. The expected costs (T) are measured as the average lead-time between company commitment and recognition.

ULF Employment Model

5.14 Substituting ULF for IiP, it would be possible to develop a similar approach regarding ULF activity as an employer HR investment that would reap added value employment benefits. This could be denoted as follows:

$$G(ulf) = \frac{Gc - Gs}{Tc - Ts}$$

5.15 The employer benefit of investment in ULF activity, G (ulf) is the average employment growth observed between the start and completion of ULF activity, with the costs the average lead time between start and completion.

5.16 The model would be estimated based on a sample of randomly assigned ULF participating companies and randomly assigned non-ULF participating unionised companies.

5.17 The employment change information is not currently available, but could be generated through a sample survey.

5.18 While the ULF employment model can be specified and tested, we have to decide whether or not it is logically feasible to pose the causal relationship between ULF activity and employment change.

ULF/IiP Comparison

5.19 The case for a legitimate employment impact from IiP has been made. Can a similar case be made for ULF? **Table 5.1** contrasts some of the features of ULF and IiP, thus helping to answer the questions posed.

Table 5.1: IiP/ULF Comparison: Features of Approach	
IiP	**ULF**
▪ Employer driven for company need ▪ Higher employer commitment ▪ Top down ▪ Whole organisation ▪ Significant company investment ▪ Clear standard measure of achievement ▪ Systematic/holistic ▪ All staff aware ▪ Evaluation plan ▪ Business growth objective ▪ Definable period of operation ▪ Holistic cultural framework ▪ Fundamental employer engagement	▪ Union driven for employee need ▪ Possible low employer commitment ▪ Bottom up ▪ Part organisation ▪ Possible marginal company investment ▪ No benchmark or framework ▪ Ad hoc ▪ Some staff aware ▪ No evaluation plan ▪ No business growth objective ▪ No definable period of operation ▪ Single strand of HR activity ▪ Indirect or variable employer contact

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5.20 It is clear from the comparisons drawn in **Table 5.1** that there are quite significant differences between IiP and ULF activity, which brings into doubt the logical feasibility of the employment model approach.

Employer Dimension

5.21 Perhaps the most fundamental difference relates to the degree, direction and dimension of employer involvement. IiP is primarily an employer driven initiative, which has improved business performance as an explicit objective. ULF, on the other hand, is a grass root initiative, which seeks to gain employer support. Levels of strategic employer awareness and intervention have been relatively low. Whilst there are clear exceptions, in the main there has been 'passing' employer involvement. This brings into doubt the concept of 'irreversible investment', central to the HR employment model.

Scale of Activity

5.22 IiP represents a holistic framework of HR activity, containing a diverse portfolio of learning, training and development activity. ULF is no more than a single strand of HR input which, in some cases, may be additional or outside company's planned HR programme. Thus where investment decisions might be regarded as 'irreversible', the scale of activity is often relatively modest and could not be easily attributable as 'causal' to future employment growth.

Time Period

5.23 Within the IiP employment model, the time period against which the employment effect is measured is clearly definable. While the period of time will vary between companies, it is set by the formal IiP elements of commitment and recognition. The period of effect is much less clear in the ULF context and would require almost 'arbitrary start' and 'completion dates'. This could undermine aspects of relative comparison. In addition, periods of ULF operation might be relatively short, e.g. 12 months, making it doubly difficult to capture an employment effect.

> **We conclude from the above that a ULF employment model is not logically feasible, although *technically* it could be specified and applied.**

ULF Intermediate Impacts

5.24 It is possible, for the reasons identified above, that final economic outcomes cannot be easily traced from ULF activity. A range of alternative measures is set out in **Table 5.2**. These were drawn from a list of benefits and potential impacts identified from discussions with four employers. Most might be regarded as intermediate impacts which could be defined as necessary, though not sufficient, to achieve the wider measure. The indicators are grouped within four categories:

(i) **company performance**: these include a number of alternative economic measures such as profitability, productivity and competitiveness;

(ii) **attitudes to learning**: these include a number of softer attitudinal and perceptional measures around workforce development such as management attitude to training and employee commitment to learning;

(iii) **communications**: measures here relate to communication issues around staff morale, but also some harder indicators such as staff turnover and attendance;

(iv) **core skills**: these focus on skill achievement levels around numeracy, literacy and IT.

Table 5.2 Benefits observed as a result of company involvement in union-led learning activities funded through the Union Learning Fund (N=4)				
Activity/Benefit	**Observed**	**Not observed**	**Don't know**	**Evidence /Recording system**
Company Performance				
An increase in company profitability	o	oo	o	Co. data
An increase in sales	o	oo	o	Co. data
Increased market share		ooo	o	Co. data
Raised workforce/production levels	oo	o	o	Co. data
Raised workforce productivity	ooo		o	Co. data
Increased company competitiveness	o	o	oo	Co. data
Attitudes to learning				
Raised awareness among managers of the benefits of lifelong learning for staff	oooo			Learner reps.
Changed management attitude to staff training	oooo			Learner reps.
Raised awareness among employees of the benefits of lifelong learning	oooo			N/r
A workforce that is easier to train	oooo			N/r
A workforce that is more willing to take part in company training /learning activities	oooo			N/r
Employees have been encouraged to continue learning	oooo			N/r
A workforce that has more of the skills necessary for internal promotion	oooo			N/r
Communications				
A more confident/ enthusiastic workforce	oooo			N/r
Improved staff morale	oooo			N/r
Improved industrial relations	oooo			Co. stats
Improved health and safety practices	ooo		o	Co. stats
Improved internal communication	oooo			N/r
A more punctual workforce	o	ooo		Co. stats
A reduction in days lost	o	ooo		Co. stats
Reduced staff turnover	o	ooo		Co. stats
Core skills				
Improved workforce literacy skills	oooo			N/r
Improved workforce numeracy skills	ooo	o		N/r
Improved workforce IT skills	oooo			N/r

Key: o = number of mentions by companies,
N/r = no evidence/recording system reported by contributors

5.25 Clearly it will be possible to expand both the range and definition of the second order indicators. We were interested, however, to test out these groups of measures with four employers who had both significant experience of ULF operation and were also enthusiastic supporters - the rationale being that if the measures don't work for this group they certainly won't work for others.

Employer Experience

5.26 Through the employer consultations we aimed to establish:

- are the measures legitimate, i.e. could ULF be a contributing factor?
- had they observed any taking place?
- had they any evidence of recording systems?

5.27 The analysis presented is based on qualitative consultations with four ULF employers.

(i) Legitimate Measures

5.28 There is a consensus that the measures were reasonable measures of ULF outcome, although for some of the company performance indicators it would be difficult for employers to trace causality.

(ii) Observed Activity

5.29 Table 5.2 shows the responses for the four companies we consulted in depth and displays a high level of observation, particularly around attitudes, communication and core skills. Areas where there were lower observations include company performance and the harder communication measures of attendance and staff turnover.

<u>(iii) Evidence</u>

5.30 While the above results are quite encouraging, what is missing is hard evidence. In most cases, positive observation is based on a perceptual judgement. Interestingly, the areas where there is hard company information available are also the areas where there is low observation.

5.31 Companies consulted thought that the information necessary to maintain performance against these measures could be collected and in some cases was collected, but it was not aggregated in a way to conduct the analysis. They did not necessarily see the need to generate additional information to be confident of ULF impact. Involvement with ULF is very much viewed as an 'act of faith' or 'the right thing to do'.

Human Resource Integration

5.32 Also evident from the employer consultations were the higher level of ULF activity within IiP, company training and company appraisal systems. It was regarded very much as an additional HR input rather than a separate union activity. This further complicates the attribution of ULF impact.

Conclusions

5.33 Throughout this section there has been a consistency of messages emerging from different levels of potential investigation. It is quite clear that there are **significant difficulties associated with identifying the economic impact of ULF activity** through wider employer/business impacts.

5.34 From the analysis presented here, we would draw the following five conclusions:

(i) there is little merit in seeking to assess the economic impact of ULF through an IiP type employment model approach;

(ii) intermediate employer related measures can be identified but will prove difficult to measure in any rigorous fashion. There is likely to be resistance from employers to generate this information;

(iii) the integrated nature of HR activity makes it difficult to tease out the ULF effect at company level;

(iv) given the difficulty of establishing company performance data, there may be greater merit in tracing economic type benefits through the impact on the individual.   This is more clearly the focus of a great deal of ULF activity and information might be more easily gathered through ULF systems;

(v) if there is a policy wish to link ULF activity more clearly to economic outcomes as defined by company performance, there is a need to focus ULF projects more clearly on particular identifiable and measurable company activities.   It will also be necessary to agree collaborative methodologies involving unions and employers to measure the impacts.

6   CONCLUSIONS OF THE FOURTH EVALUATION

> **Catalyst:** *"Substance speeding chemical reaction without itself changing"*… **"person or thing that precipitates change"**
> **(Oxford Compact Dictionary 2001ed)**

Purpose

6.1   The purpose of the Fund remains valid: trade unions have shown that they can make a contribution to engaging and supporting individuals in lifelong learning. The key issue for the ULF as a catalyst in an environment of change is not to stay the same, but if need is further demonstrated, to evolve and refocus to stimulate continued development, to continue to precipitate change.

Efficiency and Effectiveness

6.2   As with previous years, this year's evaluation has reported the growth of activity. There has been an increase in volumes, overall and by project, there continues to be a wide range of activities including improving access and relevance, content and outcomes, and union-led projects are gaining in efficiency as experience grows.

6.3   The crude indicators of unit cost used over this evaluation have shown increased efficiency. In that sense it is likely that value for money is also improving. It is worth reiterating that as the reported volumes of learners supported and qualifications developed etc. increase, unions do not view themselves as taking over the role of providers but are developing the role of learning intermediaries and facilitators between several other parties: individuals, educators, employers, policy makers and funders.

6.4 Quantitative measures may therefore not be sufficient or representative for this role: in the future activity may be better measured through 'distance travelled' by individuals and changes in attitudes as well as in participation rates.

Capacity and Sustainability

6.5 It has become apparent in preparing this report that the performance measures (particularly the quantitative measures) for ULF, which were largely determined in the first year of the Fund, do not adequately reflect the developments in capacity and relationships with partners, which will determine the long term sustainability of union-led activity.

6.6 Unions are, in general, exceeding performance targets set in projects and have become much more able to access additional resources (and more willing to contribute internal resources) to maintain and enhance the core ULF project activities. To this end, the Fund is proving successful and the trade unions have responded well to the challenges presented in taking advantage of the Fund's offer of support. As the emphasis shifts increasingly to embedding and roll-out of activity, other measures will be required to reflect what the union contribution (and, within this contribution, that of ULF) has been in qualitative and quantitative terms.

6.7 Current arrangements for measuring and reporting the developments in capacity are inadequate and ad hoc. For example, unions are not asked directly to report on changes in structure or staffing levels applied to lifelong learning activities that reflect long term effects or benefits from ULF support.

6.8 The quantitative reporting of activities such as numbers of learners engaged, and training needs analysis carried out, have become less reliable as a measure of either the range of activities carried out in supporting different groups of learners, or of the activities performed by the trade union compared with other partners in the project, such as colleges. For example, where trade unions are seeking to establish a long term role in providing advice and guidance to potential learners, this could complement or contradict IAG services to adults which are resourced and provided outside ULF – will this end in collaboration or competition for funds? Where trade unions are working with providers such as FE colleges, what has been the balance between the union contribution to success and the providers? How will they share the resources available to fund the overall learning pathway?

Employer Involvement with ULF

6.9 The survey of employers established that they valued their involvement with the union-led learning activities and that they had observed benefits arising from the projects that had been undertaken with support from ULF. Benefits were particularly reported in the areas of improved industrial relations, confidence and willingness to train/learn. Employers were also keen to maintain their involvement and the majority felt that ULF had been key to enabling the activity.

6.10 Employers have also increased their contribution to the overall resources going into projects. This probably reflects the benefits they have experienced: employers will be more willing to invest in a proven activity than an unknown one.

6.11 However, we have also reported that project workers appear to be confused (and are certainly inconsistent in reporting) about the nature of employer involvement: there were inconsistencies in Year Four on the number and nature of employers involved, and the assumptions made on the likely sample for the employer survey (based on project reports from previous years) were proven extremely optimistic. If employer involvement is to be a key measure of success for ULF in future years, it is vital that the expected nature of involvement is understood and recorded.

6.12 It is also important that expectations of employer benefits from involvement in ULF are clear. Our feasibility study on economic impacts for employers shows that this would be an extremely difficult and probably unreliable exercise. As with the employer survey, ULF appears more likely to result in 'softer' changes in relationships and attitudes than in attributable economic gain. However, ULF activity might have an influence on uptake or continued participation in other, more measurable activities such as Investors in People.

6.13 The evaluation of Year Four projects has not identified significant new difficulties or issues at project level, when compared with previous years. We are already aware that the emphasis in Year 5 of ULF has shifted to consolidation, embedding and development of capacity and it appears that most unions will be in a position to respond to this emphasis. Most of our recommendations, therefore, are concerned with the future development of the Fund and consideration of how evaluation strategy should develop.

7   ULF 1998 – 2002: A REVIEW OF PROGRESS

> **Aims of the Fund**:
>
> *"We want to see effective and sustainable activity by trade unions and their partners, which promotes learning in the widest sense and builds a strategy for competitiveness, employability and inclusion"*
>
> Year 4 ULF Prospectus.

Introduction

7.1   The inception of the Union Learning Fund in 1998 marked an opportunity for trade unions to engage actively with the keystone Government policy of developing lifelong learning and improving educational opportunities in the context of the "Competitiveness Agenda". Although a small fund in terms of some other Government initiatives, the initial fund of £2m was readily received by trade unions, which had little recent experience of promoting or supporting learning activity at the workplace, despite the fact that many trade unions list the promotion of education amongst their founding priniciples.

7.2   Although many of the early projects were not strictly innovative in the sense of originality, they were new experiences and opportunities for the trade unions themselves, who needed such opportunities to develop expertise in learning activities and to develop sustainable partnerships with providers, bodies such as the emerging Regional Development Agencies, National Training Organisations and Government Departments as well as with employers and employer organisations.

7.3   In addition to their experimental nature, many of the early projects were concerned with developing a basic level of capacity to support learners: the evolution of the role of the union learning representative, involvement of unions in establishing and developing learning centres, distance learning services and new qualification frameworks to increase access to those with limited academic qualifications are examples of initiatives taken through ULF.

7.4 We have noted that the overall volumes of learning activity against most of the key measures have increased annually, and that the key output costs associated with those measures have in general reduced: as unions have become more experienced and as they have developed partnerships, resources provided through ULF have been used more efficiently, including the leverage of funds from an increasing range of sources. The levered funds have seen both overall increases across the Fund and by project.

7.5 We highlighted at the beginning of this section the key aim of the Fund: to see effective and sustainable activity and building of strategies in trade unions to promote and support learning. The report of this fourth cycle of evaluation falls with one full year of committed Fund activity remaining (as the fifth year is already under way): it is therefore timely to review and restate some of the indicators of progress and recommendations we have made. The comments included below are intended to highlight areas where continued progress has been observed and also where continued review by the Department and the TUC is necessary to ensure that the Fund remains relevant and effective in achieving its core objectives.

7.6 The purpose of this review is to help inform recommendations for the further development of the Fund. The review contains extracts from previous evaluations[12], linked to the headings below, that will help the reader to see how the ULF has developed in recent years and to observe some key trends and issues that have emerged. The section is not intended to be analytical, but the observations inform the section on recommendations and in particular the discussion on the future direction of the Fund. The headings used are:

- Vision;
- Policy and themes;
- Performance;
- Achievements;
- Capacity;
- Partnerships;
- Impact and sustainability.

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[12] All published by the Department in the Research Publications series:
An Early Evaluation of the Union Learning Fund, DfES, May 1999, RB113
A Second Evaluation of the Union Learning Fund, DfES, July 2000, RB208/RR208
Evaluation of the Union Learning Fund in Year Three, DfES, July 2001, RB282, RR282

Vision

7.7 Earlier evaluations have encouraged the Department to assist ULF by being clear on its medium and long term policy context and by ensuring that effective linkages exist with related policy initiatives:

- "The Department needs to ensure that there are effective linkages between (ULF and) related policy areas, for example in the development of workforce development plans (for RDAs and LSC) and Investors in People". Y2 Evaluation

- "Stronger emphasis needs to be placed on … developing ULF projects within the context of a medium or long term vision for learning". Y2 Evaluation

- "DfES should set the context for ULF in the medium term by stating more explicitly its expectations of ways in which union-led lifelong learning will develop in the next five to ten years." Y3 Evaluation

Policy and themes

7.8 Three key developments were noted between Year One and Year Three:

- there were an increasing number of projects with a national focus;

- there was an increased focus on basic skills, with the Fund providing 'ring fenced' funding from Year 2;

- the rapid growth of fund and the longer term view possible from the 2000 Spending Review increased the capacity of the Fund to accommodate larger and longer projects.

7.9 As a result of the increase in resources from the Spending Review, Fund spend on projects increased from £1.8m in Year 1 to £6.9m in Year 4. The projects supported developed new opportunities and addressed the needs of diverse groups of potential learners:

- "There still remains the need for <u>union</u> commitment to ensure that learning reps activities are sustained in the longer term" Y2 Evaluation

- "It must not be forgotten that specialist unions have also had successes in developing access to provision and promoting continuing development amongst professional workers. A notable feature of these projects has been to offer access to learning to professionals who work non-traditional hours (or patterns of work) and are often excluded from learning opportunities". Y2 Evaluation

- "Unions have been very successful in engaging non-traditional learners including older males, people in ethnic minority groups and shift workers". Y3 Evaluation

7.10 Although at the outset the Fund had not planned to support projects over the medium term, it became clear that sustainable sources of funding could take longer than one year to secure, or that some projects needed longer to reach the point of demonstrating their added value:

- "One in five projects are in their first year of operation, half have been in their second year and almost a third are more established projects that have been supported by the ULF for three years." Y3 Evaluation

Performance

7.11 The fund has increased in size each year; and there has been an increase in the number of projects funded each year. In ULF4 there was a 27% increase in the number of projects funded over the previous round. The average amount of funding per project has also been a rising trend with a 29% increase in the average funding per project in Year 4 from the previous year. These figures are summarised in **Table 7.1.**

Table 7.1 ULF Funding by Year					
	Year 1	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**Year 4**	**Total**
Number of projects	44	64	95	121	324
Funding £	1,692,171	2,663,770	4,190,677	6,919,709	15,466,327
Average funding per project £	38,458	41,621	44,112	57,188	47,736
Growth in average funding per project		8%	6%	30%	

7.12 Unions and Fund managers continued to juggle the (sometimes conflicting) balance between innovation and growth of volume in delivering projects:

- "Innovation (has come) through contextualising existing materials to make provision more relevant to learners, extending access to provision to those who work non-traditional hours and spreading good practice". Y2 Evaluation

- "Basic skills projects have made good initial progress – however, the extent to which learners with basic skills needs have been engaged in learning has been below that expected". Y2 Evaluation

- "Projects in year 3 have delivered a higher level of average output". Y3 Evaluation

- "Project performance against targets has improved significantly. The more established projects are developing on a more strategic basis". Y3 Evaluation

- "Additional leverage of funding from employers and unions has increased significantly. Additional funding has been from a wider range of sources". Y3 Evaluation

Achievements

7.13 **Table 7.2** presents the quantitative outputs from all four rounds of the ULF. Although **some of the reported numbers should be treated with caution as the definitions may have been interpreted differently by projects**, the most significant achievements are:

- number of learners;
- number of learning reps trained;
- number of learning centres established/developed;
- number of learners achieving qualifications.

Table 7.2 Outputs for each round of ULF and total outputs to date					
Outputs	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**Year 4**	**Total**
Number of learners	2,172	4,460	7,322	14,330	28,284
Number attending awareness sessions	5,728	7,725	11,960	36,458	61,871
Number of learning reps trained	734	882	1,640	1,540	4,796
Number achieving qualifications	603	834	4,559	6,284	12,280
Number of accredited courses developed	12	79	69	402	562
Number of other materials developed	51	44	69	167	331
Number of employers involved	633	549	1,110	1,192	3,484
Number of learning centres established/developed	11	15	40	66	132
Number of ILAs opened	488	2,404	3,713	5,485	12,090
Number of learning needs analyses	2,243	1,523	5,162	25,213	34,141

Capacity

7.14 Although there was a higher number of projects based in other regions in Year 4, overall activity from Year 1 to Year 4 continued the concentration of activity in certain regions:

- where density of trade union membership was highest (North West England);

- where TUC Bargaining for Skills and Learning Services teams were strong (London);

- "There has not been a significant shift in the distribution of ULF activity by region, with relative concentrations in London and the North West." Y3 Evaluation

7.15 One consequence of this has been the development of the Learning for all Fund in the North East of England, with a focus on building regional union capacity. It is beneficial to have access to these additional resources, but care will be needed to ensure consistency of policy and sustainability if local funds are established, particularly when the LSC takes over national management of ULF.

7.16 Capacity has also been reflected in the increased ability of unions to run the projects efficiently and with good quality. The themes of ULF have encouraged unions to invest in their infrastructures to embed this development:

- "Key lessons are being learned about how to ensure quality and value for money from providers." Y2 Evaluation

- "In Year One, many of the key workers were inexperienced in project management which impacted upon both the delivery of project activities and planning for continuation. The management of Year Two projects has improved, with increased outputs per project and improved performance to target." Y2 Evaluation

- "The Department needs to consider options for supporting projects that specifically seek to address capacity building issues." Y2 Evaluation

- "In a number of cases, project managers have cascaded their experience to others through supporting and supervising new project managers and key workers." Y2 Evaluation

7.17 Unions also took some time to acquire the experience and develop the networks necessary to build long term viability for their learning activities:

- "There is a lack of planning for sustainability … and limited integration of activities with other 'mainstream' post-16 initiatives." Y2 Evaluation

- "There is further scope to engage management in the union-led learning activities." Y3 Evaluation

- "Projects have produced business plans to demonstrate how activities will be sustained in the longer term – there is much more evidence of sustainability than in Years One and Two." Y3 Evaluation

- "An aim of the ULF is to build union capacity to deliver lifelong learning … there has, to date, been no clear definition of what 'capacity building' is and how this can be reported." Y3 Evaluation

7.18 This last point was developed in a TUC ULF workshop in Autumn 2001: the workshop further discussed the **ten key elements** in building union capacity in lifelong learning that were highlighted in the Evaluation:

- Base strategies on the needs of members within a sector;

- Develop 'agents for change' that promote lifelong learning in the workplace;

- Engage lay reps, officers and committee members, raising awareness of lifelong learning activities;

- Develop union policy on lifelong learning through debate across the union;

- Clarify roles and responsibilities across union structures;

- Strengthen and extend partnerships;

- Develop structures and resources internally that support the learning agenda;

- Share good practice to help build skills and expertise on learning;

- Evaluate and communicate successes to others;

- Develop a longer term vision for the future.

Partnerships

7.19 Unions were often starting from a very low base when working with partners such as education providers. Increasingly the support of the Fund has enabled unions to develop appropriate links, to determine where they can make an effective contribution and to identify where the unions should work outside existing arrangements, for example in developing direct services 'on-line'.

- "Projects have found that providers … have limited experience of delivery in the workplace and therefore work closely with providers to ensure that content and delivery meets learners' needs." Y2 Evaluation

- "The college has tried to run basic skills previously, without any significant take up. The learning reps have played a vital role in selling the course to learners and supporting them through it." Y2 Evaluation

Impact and Sustainability

7.20 We have seen above that unions took some time to establish the relationships to make their activities sustainable. The evaluations also identified the need for both the Department and the unions to develop appropriate monitoring and management systems to report success.

- "Unions (need) to be able to demonstrate more clearly, through more systematic monitoring and evaluation, the added value of their activities – particularly the extent to which ULF projects are reaching non-traditional learners. Monitoring and evaluation need to be improved as a tool to help promote ULF activities and outcomes." Y2 Evaluation

- "The national evaluation project now needs to extend the range of evaluation activities to focus more systematically on setting baselines (and) measuring the impact of ULF on learners, unions and employers. The more systematic data on project profiles and achievements will enable a structural sample to be developed." Y2 Evaluation

- "In asking projects for data on project activities and outcomes, it has been noticeable that many projects have not been able to monitor the number of 'new' or non-traditional learners or their characteristics such as age, gender or ethnicity." Y2 Evaluation

- "Although initial assessment of learner needs is taking place there is not a systematic recording of the level of need or the progress made by 'basic skill' learners." Y2 Evaluation

- "Union based learning projects are able to support individuals through building confidence, supporting learners as they progress and advising on possible next steps." Y2 Evaluation

- "There has been a significant increase in the extent to which lifelong learning for members has been integrated into union agendas. Capacity has developed through skills and experience of key staff, the increase in numbers of learning reps, the development of mechanisms to support them in the workplace and emerging union strategies on lifelong learning." Y3 Evaluation

- "Support and financial commitment from unions' own funds has increased dramatically. There is a need to ensure that policy and strategies develop to build infrastructures and integrate lifelong learning with 'mainstream' union activity." Y3 Evaluation

- "An unexpected benefit noted by employers has been the positive impact on industrial relations." Y3 Evaluation

- "The process of agreeing the monitoring and evaluation framework needs to be completed and ULF projects should have guidance on the information they will be asked for, setting out key dates and the format in which this data will be requested." Y3 Evaluation

- "The national evaluation needs to be refocused to measure the impact of the ULF on learners and employers." Y3 Evaluation

Conclusions

7.21 Individual trade unions, the TUC and the Department have clearly responded to issues highlighted in the early years of the Fund's operation and have developed more effective ways of managing the Fund and delivering Fund and project objectives.

7.22 By its nature, building capacity and sustaining initiatives that have been developed takes time. The Fund has shifted its emphasis gradually to encourage longer term development and embedding of experience and capacity in trade unions. However, some of the key issues to do with longer term vision for the Fund and addressing the problems relating to the scope and methods intended for long term assessment of impact from the Fund are still outstanding. Unions have in general responded to the changing requirements of the Fund, but expectation grows with success and it is increasingly important that unions understand what they can expect – and plan for – from the Fund in coming years and what reporting arrangements they will be expected to adhere to.

8   RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations Arising from Review of Year 4 Projects

8.1   Out of 66 questionnaire returns of Year 4 projects, only 6 employers were involved in the delivery of the project and only 5 projects indicated employer involvement. However, in the outputs section of the questionnaires, 47 projects indicated employer involvement with a total of 1,192 employers involved in the project. There would appear to be inconsistent definition of what is meant by employer involvement, which has been borne out in gathering data for the employer survey. **DfES should review the nature of what constitutes employer involvement in ULF projects and how projects are expected to report such involvement**. This includes specification of information that should be contained in project MI returns, such as:

- Nature and degree of involvement;
- Contact details for key individuals.

8.2   A significant minority of projects (20%) did not set out quantifiable targets in their project bids to the ULF in Year 4. This has been an issue since Year One: **DfES should review the requirements of the bidding documents and prospectus to require explicit and measurable performance targets in bids.**

8.3   The approach of using a standard set of output indicators hides the true variety of outputs achieved through ULF.   These indicators cannot automatically be used to measure the extent to which capacity has been built across the Union. As the focus of ULF shifts to roll out and embedding capacity, **the range of output indicators should be revised to reflect current expectations of performance, measures of success and themes** in the Fund.

8.4   There is inconsistency in project managers' understanding of what is to be recorded against some of the output measures. This was particularly the case in training needs analyses and number of accredited courses developed.   **The requirements and processes for collection of management information need to be clarified to simplify the process of collection and to ensure everyone is measuring the same outputs in a consistent manner**. The current pilot on Management Information systems will help identify appropriate scope and methodology for this.

Recommendations Arising from Employer Impact Studies

8.5 When gathering contacts for the employer survey, the files held at DfES were understood to contain copies of evaluation reports, steering group minutes and other key documents in addition to the original bids and contract documents. A great many files for completed projects did not appear to hold documents such as project reports or evaluation reports. **The extent to which DfES administrators should be ensuring that reporting information is provided by projects (including as a matter of contract compliance) should be reviewed**.

8.6 We have reported earlier that almost half of employers could not suggest any improvement to the ULF programme. The largest tangible suggestion was to improve communication and advertising of ULF to employers. In the light of the positive responses from employers to the Fund and the activities supported by it, **we recommend a review of the promotional strategy for ULF to employers - for raising awareness of benefits of the ULF programme and access through partnerships with unions.** As unions continue to report barriers in accessing resources and time off at the workplace, such promotion should be co-ordinated through professional journals at all levels and types of management, e.g. the Institute of Directors, IPD, other sector journals, IIP publications etc.

8.7 The feasibility study on employer impact has found that there are **significant difficulties associated with identifying the economic impact of ULF activity** through wider employer/business impacts. There is little merit in seeking to assess the economic impact of ULF through an IiP type employment model approach. **If there is a policy wish to link ULF activity more clearly to economic outcomes as defined by company performance**, **there is a need to focus ULF projects more clearly on particular identifiable and measurable company activities**.

8.8 Employers remain a key partner and contributor to ULF activities, especially those focusing on providing opportunities at individual workplaces. In order to build a clearer picture of employer expectation and benefit from participation in ULF, the **Department could explore**:

- Sampling employers who are getting involved for the first time in ULF at an early stage in the project's life (for example, by extracting details from letters of support attached to successful bids): this survey could help establish a 'baseline' of employers expectation of involvement;

- Including links/measures from ULF (and possibly other union-led learning activity) in other impact studies such as Investors in People, where employers might report changes/benefits in the context of wider activity.

Recommendations for Management of the ULF

8.9 The progress in Year Four and the success of ULF over the past four years presents a further challenge for trade unions and ULF.

8.10 If, as it appears, the ULF has been a success and if trade unions are to embed and sustain the role of instigators, intermediaries and facilitators in ways the ULF projects have shown to be most effective, union planning and commitment will be assisted by early indication from the Department of how it envisages the long term development of the Fund. The challenge, therefore, is "What should ULF become?"

What should ULF become?

8.11 If the purpose is to show that certain union-led activities can work, this has largely been done in the first four years of the Fund – there are now many examples of activities and the benefits that they can bring. There is little advantage to repeating these activities with funding from ULF. In fact, the risk is that if these activities are funded repetitively the Fund encourages dependency and 'mundane' activity. There is also a risk that the Fund becomes reactive to short term difficulties and issues (such as the withdrawal of ILAs), possibly resulting in projects changing their objectives in order to fit Fund objectives.

8.12 The early evaluations also highlighted the need to encourage unions to diversify their funding away from ULF: again, the risk was that projects would gradually change their objectives in order to fit to funding criteria – this was one of the key reasons for developing a union strategic plan and the requirement for a 'business plan' for sustainability. The key purpose that remains is capacity building and mainstreaming. **The issue is to plan strategically on the success of ULF**.

8.13 ULF **is** a capacity building fund. It should not be about reacting to 'local' needs (i.e. in individual unions, particular groups of individual learners, regions etc) other than to achieve progress towards long term capacity in unions to identify, support and contribute to resolving wider lifelong learning objectives.

8.14 As a capacity building fund for learning, **the key issue is to mainstream learning in the union agenda**. The approach taken in the first four years has been to support (mainly) bottom up projects that create the conditions for change to occur in the perspective of senior union managers and employers. The focus of Year Five could reinforce this continued bottom up approach or further catalyse a change in approach. The opportunity is to encourage a holistic approach and focus on opportunities such as regional and sectoral agendas.

8.15 Currently, the Fund is still working to its original objectives, though the emphasis has shifted at the operational level of the Fund. The policy environment has changed, the governance and delivery structure of learning has changed (for example in the change from DfEE to DfES, TECs and FEFC to LSC): it is appropriate for the strategic aims and expected outcomes to be reviewed to refocus the 'catalytic' principle of the Fund.

8.16 We have commented above that the objective of learning activities being 'union led' is not to install unions as providers but to **develop unions as intermediaries**. Their function is to affect the supply of learners and the provision of learning. If so, the managers of the ULF should **determine measures to that end**: in addition to measuring numbers of learners, for example, to **report changes in attitude and activity**. As with the early stages of the Fund, it would take time for these changes to become embedded.

8.17 If this approach were adopted, examples of critical interventions by unions could include:

- *assessing* learning needs and the actions required;

- *assessing* and *facilitating* the effectiveness of linkages required to provision;

- *facilitating* and *assessing* the effectiveness of support to learners engaged in learning.

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8.18 This type of activity would lead to the Fund having impact on partners, employers and providers – for employers, involvement in the Fund may affect participation and progress within standards such as Investors in People. The impact of the Fund (in regard to employers) could be linked with revised objectives, for example Policy Innovation Unit (PIU) has developed eight indicators for employer engagement in workforce development[13], and there are possible links to the LSC Strategic Plan[14].

8.19 In the longer term, if union led activity does facilitate very large numbers of individuals to take up learning opportunities, it could be realistic to attribute such work in the Labour Force Survey as measures of the proportions of the workforce engaged.

8.20 Since the inception of the ULF, TUC Learning Services has achieved an arrangement with DfES for core funding of its development programme, including work outside ULF: indeed, the programme requires ULF to be an increasingly small element of overall funding for its success. In a similar vein, **the funds provided by ULF should become an increasingly small proportion of union-led learning activity – this should be a measure of success for ULF**, otherwise it risks being seen as a marginal activity, potentially losing sight of its catalytic role. Success in this function could be measured by the size/use of the Fund against overall funding and sources and also against the volume and range of learning activity and its source of provision (such as colleges or **learndirect**).

8.21 Taking this perspective on capacity building and sustainability (i.e. ULF as a gateway to mainstream rather than a diminishing core source of funding) would enable Fund managers to look at the whole of union led learning activity and the contribution of ULF to the whole of the union led learning agenda. There would be potential to use other sources (than core ULF data) for comparative data, e.g. WERS[15], Equal Evaluation.

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[13] Second Report expected Summer 2002.
[14] LSC Draft Workforce Development Strategy, May 2002, pp26 para 125,126.
[15] Workplace Employment Relations Survey

An evaluation strategy for ULF

8.22 One of the main areas of focus of this evaluation has been on the possible impact of ULF on employers. We have seen that employers do recognise some benefits from involvement, but that it is unlikely that a study of 'hard' impact indicators would be practical. One perspective of this is that employers are encouraged to enter into IiP as a business investment and to realise benefits from that investment: employers do not appear to enter into ULF as a business investment.

8.23 It is likely that DfES will wish to explore other areas of impact, yet it is not clear what the strategy for this assessment is or what the expected outcomes are. The assessment of impact for learners – if under consideration - may encounter many of the same difficulties experienced in the employer impact study.

8.24 There are three key areas of Impact for ULF:

- *Process:* the design of programmes; resources/delivery structures in unions; relationships, e.g. the effectiveness of ULF activities compared with other agencies such as RDAs, local LSCs etc.

- *Individuals:* attitudes, aspirations, qualifications, employability etc.

- *Employer:* as discussed above, if DfES want a clear link to employer benefit from ULF, it must:

  – be clear and explicit as to what the objectives for ULF are in this regard;

  – identify relevant projects at the outset that will contribute to this objective;

  – be clear on measures of success and expectations;

  – be clear on the objectives for projects.

8.25 We have given the opinion that the Fund **is** a catalyst, i.e. it precipitates change. Unlike a chemical catalyst, the Fund must change in the process to remain relevant. To measure the impact and therefore relevance, the **evaluation should measure changes in attitude as well as activity** – it should aim **primarily** to measure the 'knock on' effects not just the 'first hit'.

8.26 **An explicit forward plan for the evaluation of the Fund is now essential**. The management information/data collection issues reported over the last three years are still current, and the approach to any future evaluation will partly be based on what unions and projects collect now. A future evaluation strategy in the public domain will dictate what has to be collected in the future, for the future.

8.27 If there is to be a successor programme to ULF (including provision for transition to sustainable sources for the large Year Five projects recently agreed), it can be underpinned with the development of an evaluation strategy for the next three to four years.

8.28 Critical early steps to embedding this evaluation strategy include:

- review and refocus of the aims and objectives of ULF as a catalyst;

- defining an evaluation strategy to report 'current' development and longer term impact;

- define the areas of impact expected and measures to record them;

- ensure baselines will be available to underpin the areas of impact;

- ensure that appropriate Management Information will be available.

APPENDIX A:
PROJECT MANAGERS' SURVEY

Department for Education and Skills
ULF Evaluation Year 4

Questionnaire for projects funded in Year 4

PROJECT: «Project»

REFERENCE: «ULF_Reference»

Start Date:	**Month**	**Year**
End Date:	**Month**	**Year**

UNION: «Union»

YOUR NAME: …………………………………………………………………..

TEL. NO.: …………………………………………………………………..

Please complete by 18[h] February 2002
and return to
York Consulting
92 North Street
Leeds LS2 7PN
Tel. 0113 222 3545
Fax. 0113 222 3540

Self assessment

In order to simplify completion of this questionnaire, we have developed a checklist to direct you to the sections of the questionnaire that are of relevance to your project.

Please tick the boxes that apply to your ULF project and fill in the relevant sections of the questionnaire.

Sections to be completed by all Project Managers

Background Information – Section A
Go to White Section

Employer Details - Section B
Go to Blue Section

Sections to be completed by Project Managers whose projects either support basic skills learners or include union learning representatives activity.

Union Learning Representative Activity - Section C
Go to Green Section

Basic Skills – Section D
Go to Pink Section

BACKGROUND INFORMATION
SECTION A – TO BE COMPLETED BY ALL PROJECT MANAGERS
ACHIEVEMENTS

1) Below is the standard range of output targets across all ULF projects. Please enter details of the progress against the targets that are relevant to your project

Awareness Raising   Achievements (by 31/01/02)
a) Number of people attending awareness sessions through
your project

Identifying learning needs
b) Number of people that have had their learning needs
surveyed/assessed

Learners
c)Number of learners starting courses *Please distinguish*   Learning reps:
between learning reps and learners

                                                                      Learners:

d) Of the learning reps trained *Please identify the number*   Initial:
attending initial training, such as FLAG, and further training,
such as basic skills   Further:

e) Number of learning reps and learners achieving a   Learning reps:
qualification
                                                                      Learners:

Please indicate the type of qualifications achieved:
Materials and Resources
f) Number of accredited courses/qualifications developed

g) Number of 'other' courses/training materials developed

h) Number of learning centres developed
Employers
i) Number of employers involved
(please provide additional information on employers in Section
B)

Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs)
On 24th October 2001, the Education and Skills Secretary announced the suspension of the Individual Learning Account programme. Although the programme has been suspended we are still interested in the number of ILAs opened and the impact of suspension on your project.

j) Number of ILAs taken-up *Please distinguish*   ILAs opened:
between ILAs opened (i.e. accounts opened) and
ILAs used to fund courses (if known)   ILAs used:

k) Did the suspension of ILAs have a direct or indirect impact on your project? If yes, how? (for example, in terms of funding, learning opportunities, etc)

Other
l) Other achievements (project achievements other than those reported in (1a-i) above)

BARRIERS

2) What difficulties/barriers, if any, have you faced in achieving your targets?
Please tick all that apply

Barrier	✓
a) Difficulties in funding courses	
b) Over ambitious targets	
c) Lack of support from employers	
d) Lack of interest from learners	
e) Difficulty in arranging/getting access to courses	
f) Lack of support from others in the union	
g) Delays in appointment of key staff	
h) Delays in material/resource development	
i) Other, please state:	

2a) Other Barriers: Please use this space to expand on the reasons behind any barriers that you have identified in Question 2

3) What would you do differently to avoid any of the difficulties you have identified in Question 2 in the future?

IMPACT ON THE UNION

4) At what levels within the Union have you disseminated information about the project <u>and</u> the issues it raises for lifelong learning?   *Please tick all that apply*

Level of Dissemination	✓
a) To branch or regional union colleagues	
b) National education & training committee or equivalent	
c) National executive	
d) At national conference	
e) Other	

5) What impact has the project had on the union's ability to support members' lifelong learning? *(for example on resources, staff, strategy, materials developed, understanding by and support from others in the union, developing new partnerships with providers and others)*

```



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FUNDING

6) Please indicate any additional funding that has been accessed to support or extend your ULF project. Please tick the source of funding and the amount, giving the approximate amount if not exactly known

Source of Funding	✓	Amount (£)
a) ULF		
b) Union		
c) TEC		
d) Employer		
e) College/FEFC		
f) Regional Development Agency		
g) European		
h) Other, please state:		

LEARNERS

7) Below we are asking you for details about the participants in your ULF activities. PLEASE ONLY GIVE DATA THAT IS ALREADY KNOWN TO YOU – we are not asking you to collect new data, but to report any that you already have.

a) Please give an indication of the types of learners involved in the union learning projects funded by the ULF. *Write in the percent (to the nearest 5%) in each or tick not known. Please approximate if not precisely known (for example 60:40)*

	% breakdown			Not known ✓
Male			Female	
Full-time			Part-time	
Shift workers			Non-shift workers	

b) Please give an indication of the age breakdown of learners involved in the union learning projects funded by the ULF. *Write in the percent (to the nearest 5%) in each category or tick not known*
% of learners

Under 21	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	60+	Not Known ✓

c) Please give an indication of the ethnicity of learners involved in your ULF projects.
Write in the percent (to the nearest 5%) in each category or tick not known

% of learners

White	Black	Indian	*Pakistani/ Bangladeshi*	Chinese	Other Origin	Not Known ✓

d) Are any disabled[16] employees involved in the activities funded by the ULF?
Please tick one box only

Yes ☐　　No ☐　　Don't Know ☐

If yes, what proportion of employees taking part in the ULF activities are disabled? (to the nearest 5%)

Proportion (%): ☐

e) Please indicate what proportion of learners have had experience of formal learning (ie a structured learning programme such as a college course or distance learning programme) within the last two years, prior to involvement in the ULF project. *Please tick one*

% of those involved

None	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	91-100	Not Known ✓

f) Please indicate what proportion of learners had a highest qualification, prior to participation in the ULF project, above NVQ level 2 or equivalent (i.e. 4 GCSEs A-C or above). *Please tick one or not known*

% of those involved

None	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	91-100	Not Known ✓

g) Please give an indication of the occupational breakdown of employees involved in the project funded by the ULF. *Please write in the percent (to the nearest 5%) in each category or not known*

% of those involved

	None	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	91-100	Not Known ✓
Managers & Administrators												
Professional Occupations												
Associate Professional & Technical Occupations												
Clerical & Secretarial Occupations												

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[16] disability is defined as a physical or mental condition that limits the type of work that an individual can do.

Craft & related Occupations													

Personal & Protective Service Occupations													

Sales Occupations													

Plant & Machine Operatives													

Other & (unskilled) Occupations													

DATA MONITORING

8) How do you collect the data that you have reported on learners (including information on basic skills learners, if relevant)
Please tick all that apply

✓

a) Learning Needs Surveys
b) Initial assessment forms
c) Course enrolment forms
d) Learner surveys
e) Other: please state

9) For each method ticked in Q8, please indicate who collects this data using the following key: (A) Learning Reps, (B) ULF Project Workers, (C) Basic skills tutors (D) College Staff, Tutors, (E) External Evaluators, (F) Other or (G) Not Known

Who Collects the Data (A-G)?

i)   Learning Needs Surveys
ii) Initial assessment forms
iii) Course enrolment forms
iv) Learner surveys
v) Other

EMPLOYER DETAILS
SECTION B – TO BE COMPLETED BY ALL PROJECT MANAGERS

1. Are employers directly involved in the Project?

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

If yes, How many employers are directly involved? [   ]

Please indicate the number of employers who are:

i) Actively involved [   ]
(ie taking part in the project, providing management input, resources and facilities, promoting the project, providing release etc)

ii) Partially involved [   ]
(ie aware and supportive of the project, but not actively involved)

2. For each employer directly engaged in the project, please complete the table overleaf (labelled Table 1). Please photocopy this table (table 1 overleaf) and supply one table for each employer.

3. Has your union developed partnership or learning agreements with these employers? *Please tick as appropriate*

☐	Yes	These agreements were in place with some/all of these employers before ULF project(s) began
☐	Yes	These agreements have developed with some/all of these employers as part of or alongside ULF project activities
☐	No	But we hope to develop them with some/all of these employers in the near future
☐	No	It is unlikely that we will seek this type of agreement with employers

Project Reference:
Employer Details – Table 1
4. For each employer, please provide two contact names and details. Please photocopy this form and provide a copy for each separate employer.
Name of Employer (Company Name):

	Contact (1)	Contact (2)
Contact Name		
Position		
Telephone Number		
E-mail Address		
Postal Address including postcode		
Nature of involvement		

5. Does the project involve learning activities that take place in more than one workplace/site of this employer?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, for each workplace/site, please state:

Workplace/site	
Location	
Nature of the work at this location	
Employer Contact (Name, position, telephone, e-mail (if different to above)	
Number of learners	
Other unions involved in project	

UNION LEARNING REPRESENTATIVE ACTIVITY
SECTION C

1. Is there a partnership arrangement between your union & employer specifically in relation to ULRs?

Yes [   ]   No   [   ]

2. How many learning representatives have been trained by the project?

[   ]

3. What training have the ULRs received? Please tick the relevant boxes below and provide information on the number of ULRs completing each of the different units.

Unit	ULRs received training – (tick if yes)	Number of ULRs completed the unit.
a) Front-line Advice and Guidance		
b) Identifying Learners Needs		
c) Working with Employers		
d) Basic Skills		
e) Key Skills		
f) Workplace Learning (including e-learning)		
g) National Vocational Qualifications		
h) Investors in People		

4. Who provided the training? (tick relevant boxes)

TUC Education Services	Other Union Education Services	If other, which?

5. What Problem/issues have the Union Learning Representatives experienced in fulfilling their role on this project?

BASIC SKILLS LEARNERS
SECTION D

1. Does your project support basic skills learners?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, what proportion of learners have basic skills needs?

% ☐

2. What level(s) of basic skills need do the basic skills learners in your project have? *Please tick all levels that apply and if possible state the proportion of basic skills learners at each level (to nearest 5%)*

	✓	%
i) Entry Level		
ii) Level 1		
iii) Level 2		
iv) Not known		

3. What progress has been made by the basic skills learners? *Please tick all that apply and, if possible, the proportion (to the nearest 5%) of your basic skills learners in any one category*

	✓	%
a) Basic skills course not yet completed		
b) Improvements in basic skills have been identified through tutor evaluation/assessment		
c) Basic skills have been accredited, if so please state which awards:		
d) Progressed onto other courses if so please state which courses:		
e) Other achievements , please provide examples:		

APPENDIX B:
EMPLOYER TELEPHONE SURVEY

EMPLOYER SURVEY (ULF4): INVOLVEMENT IN UNION LEARNING FUND ACTIVITIES

Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is _____ and I'm calling from McCallum Layton, a social research company. We're conducting a survey on employer involvement in Union Learning Fund activities - this research is for the Department for Education and Skills (formerly known as the Department for Education and Employment) and the interview will take about 15 minutes.

Before we get into the main part of the questionnaire, I'd like to ask you some basic questions about union learning activities funded through the Union Learning Fund (ULF) and your company.

Q1 What are the union-led learning activities, funded through the Union Learning Fund, that your organisation has been involved in? PRESENT AS AN OPEN-ENDED QUESTION

Q2 Which Trade Union(s) have you been working with through the above project(s)?
('AMICUS' is the name of the recently merged unions of AEEU and MSF)

Union	Code
Amicus/AEEU	01
ASLEF	02
BECTU	03
BFAWU	04
CATU	05
CWU	06
CYWU	07
FBU	08
GMB	09
GPMU	10
ISTC	11
ITF	12
KFAT	13
Amicus/MSF	14
Musicians' Union	15
NAPO	16
NUJ	17
NUT	18
PCS	19
PROSPECT	20
RMT	21
SOR	22
TSSA	23
TGWU	24
TUC	25
UCATT	26
UNIFI	27
UNISON	28
USDAW	29

Other – please specify …………………………………………………..

Q3 Are these learning activities still in operation?

Yes	01
No	02

Q4 (If coded O1 at Q3) Is your organisation still involved with these learning activities?

Yes	01
No	02

Q5a (If coded 01 at Q 4) How long has your organisation been involved with these learning activities?

Less than 6 months	01
6 months – 1 year	02
More than 1 year but less than 2 years	03
2 years or more	04

Q5b (If coded 02 at Q 4) How long was your organisation involved with these learning activities?

Less than 6 months	
6 months – 1 year	01
More than 1 year but less than 2 years	02
2 years or more	03
	04

Q6 What sector is your company in?

Private	01
Public	02
Voluntary	03

Q7 How has your company been involved in the union-led learning projects supported by the Union Learning Fund? DO NOT PROMPT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY.

Not directly involved – the union has paid for and resourced all project activities	01
Involved in an Employer/Union Committee which covers learning-related issues	02
Helped in the marketing/promotion of union-led ULF-funded learning	03
Developed/developing a learning centre in partnership with the union	04
Paid for employees to attend courses identified by or with the support of Union Learning Reps	05
If answered Yes to 5, were these courses:	
- Job-related	05a
- For personal development purposes	05b
- Other	05c
Gave union members paid time off to train as learning reps	06
Gave learning reps paid time off to carry out their duties	07
Gave employees paid time off to meet with learning reps	08
Gave employees paid time off to take part in Basic Skills learning	09
Gave employees paid time off to undertake 'other' union-led (ULF funded) learning	10
Gave access to rooms/ equipment for union-led (ULF funded) learning	11
Other type of involvement: please describe……………………………………………..	12

Q8   Were any learning/training resources in place in your organisation prior to your involvement with this Union Learning Fund Project? DO NOT PROMPT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY.

Recognised as an Investor in People (IiP)	01
Human Resource specialists and /or an internal training team	02
Employee appraisal scheme	03
Company training plan	04
Training budget	05
An IT centre and/or a learning centre	06
A policy on lifelong learning	07
Funding of external vocational education/training delivered 'in-house'	08
Funding of external vocational education/training delivered 'off-site'	09
Funding of external non-vocational education/training delivered 'in-house'	10
Funding of external non-vocational education/training which is delivered 'off-site	11
Union 'learning reps'	12
If applicable, a recognition of your workforce's basic skills needs	13
If applicable, provision to address your workforce's basic skills needs	14
Other, please state………………………………………………………	15

Q9   What reasons did you have for supporting union-led learning activities funded through the Union Learning Fund?   DO NOT PROMPT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY.

	01
Raising managers' awareness of the benefits of lifelong learning for staff	02
Raising employees' awareness of the benefits of lifelong learning	03
Improving workforce literacy skills	04
Improving workforce numeracy skills	05
Improving workforce IT skills	06
A more confident/ enthusiastic workforce	07
A more punctual workforce	08
A workforce that is more receptive to training	09
A workforce that is more willing to take part in company training/learning activities	10
A workforce which has more of the skills necessary for their promotion	11
Raised workforce productivity	12
An increase in sales	13
Reduced staff turnover	14
An increase in company profitability	15
Improvement in industrial relations	16
Improvement in health and safety practices	17
Improvement in internal communication	18
Encouraging employees to continue learning	
	19
Other, please state…………………………………………………………………..	
Don't know	

Q 10 To what extent are the union-led learning activities linked to the other learning activities in your organisation listed below. *(Please tick relevant boxes)*

	Not Applicable	Strong links in place	Some links in place	No links at all	Don't know
1 Investors in People (IiP)					
2 Appraisal/performance review					
3 Internal training provision					
4 External training provision					
5 Other (please state)					

Q11   How many of your staff have been involved in the union-led learning projects funded by the Union Learning Fund? Please give an approximate number if you're unsure of the exact one:

	No Involvement	Number of people	Not Known
1 Senior Managers			
2 Line managers			
3 HR staff			
4 Union learning reps			
5 Workforce *(not including HR or management)*			
6 Other (please state)			

Q12 During the period of involvement, how frequently on average have the following categories of staff been involved in the union-led learning activities funded by the Union Learning Fund?
READ OUT frequencies for each staff category.

		No Involvement	Daily	Weekly	2-3 times a month	Once a month	Less than once a month	Not known
1	Senior Managers							
2	Line managers							
3	HR staff							
4	Union learning reps							
5	Workforce *(not including HR or management)*							
6	Other (please state)							

		YES **	NO	DK
Q13 I'd now like to ask you about the different categories of staff who were involved in the union-led learning projects funded through the Union Learning Fund.				
Learning experiences				
People with little history of taking part in company training/ learning initiatives	01			
People with poor basic skills (low levels of literacy and numeracy)	02			
People who lacked confidence in their ability to learn new things	03			
Occupational breakdown				
Managers and administrators	04			
Professionals	05			
Associate professionals and technicians	06			
Clerical and secretarial staff	07			
Craft and related staff	08			
Personal and protective service staff	09			
Sales staff	10			
Plant and machine operatives	11			
Other (and unskilled) staff	12			
Gender				
Male	13			
Female	14			
Working hours				
Full-time	15			
Part-time	16			
Shift worker	17			
Non-shift worker	18			
Contract staff	19			
Agency workers ('temps')	20			
Age				
Under 21	21			
21-30	22			
31-40	23			
41-50	24			
51-60	25			
60+	26			
Not known				

		YES	NO	DK
Ethnicity				
White	27			
Black African	28			
Black Carribean	29			
Indian	30			
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	31			
Chinese	32			
Other origin	33			
Not Known	34			
Disabled *				
Registered disabled	35			
Non-registered disabled	36			
Not disabled	37			

*disability is defined as a physical or mental condition that limits the type of work that an *individual can do.*

** if 25%+ indicate yes, please ask if they are willing to fill in a fax sheet asking for a break down of percentages for categories: ask for fax number.

Q14a   What benefits have you observed as a result of your company's involvement in union learning activities funded through the Union Learning Fund?
        DO NOT PROMPT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY.

	01
Raised awareness by managers of the benefits of lifelong learning for staff	02
Raised awareness by employees of the benefits of lifelong learning	03
Improved workforce literacy skills	04
Improved workforce numeracy skills	05
Improved workforce IT skills	06
A more confident/ enthusiastic workforce	07
A more punctual workforce	08
A workforce that is easier to train	09
A workforce that is more willing to take part in company training/learning activities	10
A workforce which has more of the skills necessary for internal promotion	11
Raised workforce productivity	12
An increase in sales	13
Reduced staff turnover	14
An increase in company profitability	15
Improved industrial relations	16
Improved health and safety practices	17
Improved internal communication	18
Employees have been encouraged to continue learning	
	19
Other, please state………………………………………………………………..	
Don't know	

(Ask those who gave a positive response to one or more of the items at Q14a)

Q14b How did you assess these benefits?

Q15   To what extent do you agree
with the following statements about the union-led learning activities funded through the Union Learning Fund?

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	We would like to continue to be involved with the union learning activities					
2	The activities have been successful but they are unlikely to continue					
3	The activities have been of little benefit to the company but they have benefited the individuals taking part					
4	We are unable to give employees time off for union learning activities					
5	These activities would not take place without the funding from the ULF					

Q16   How could
more employers be encouraged to get involved with union-led learning activities funded through the Union Learning Fund?

	01
Improved marketing/promotion of the Fund	02
Linkage with standards such as Investors in People	03
Promotion of employers benefits from involvement	04
Other (SPECIFY) _____	
_____	06
Don't know	

Q17
                                                                          What would
you say is the best thing resulting from your company's involvement in union learning
activities funded through the Union Learning Fund?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q18
                                                                          What would
you say is the worst thing resulting from your company's involvement in these learning
activities?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q19
                                                                          Can you
suggest any (other) improvements to the Union Learning Fund programme?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q20
                                                                          The
government may conduct some further research over the next twelve months to explore
some issues in more detail.

                                                                          Would you
be willing for your contact details and your responses to be passed
to another organisation so that they could ask you some further questions, if they   1
decide to do this?   2
Yes
No

IF YES, CHECK NAME AND ADDRESS
IF NO, THANK & CLOSE

ANNEX A:
DATA TABLES

Table A1: Project reference, Union and Funding		
Project Number	**Union**	**Funding**
New Projects		
16/2001	AEEU	£93,000
17/2001	AEEU	£49,500
18/2001	AEEU	£30,000
71/2001	AEEU	£49,950
8/2001	ASLEF	£88,200
22/2001	BECTU	£36,584
50/2001	BECTU	£14,350
57/2001	BFAWU	£44,394
80/2001	BFAWU	£32,150
81/2001	BFAWU	£43,884
116/2001	BFAWU	£39,768
134/2001	BFAWU	£22,100
14/2001	CATU	£48,570
77/2001	CATU	£21,500
48/2001	CONNECT	£50,000
122/2001	CSEU	£53,000
23/2001	CWU	£50,000
39/2001	CWU	£61,300
64/2001	CWU	£50,000
74/2001	CWU	£50,000
75/2001	CWU	£52,500
76/2001	CWU	£39,434
95/2001	CWU	£50,000
55/2001	CYWU	£48,500
63/2001	EDAP	£47,457
52/2001	EQUITY	£22,432
36/2001	FBU	£45,500
101/2001	FBU	£48,500
4/2001	GMB	£50,000
6/2001	GMB	£50,000
28/2001	GMB	£49,500
30/2001	GMB	£54,179
62/2001	GMB	£50,000
85/2001	GMB	£50,000
92/2001	GMB	£49,000
96/2001	GMB	£53,500
102/2001	GMB	£245,000
103/2001	GMB	£114,860
110/2001	GMB	£30,889
111/2001	GMB	£39,200
9/2001	GPMU	£50,000
13/2001	GPMU	£49,000
53/2001	GPMU	£47,600
86/2001	GPMU	£49,200
104/2001	GPMU	£83,004
127/2001	GPMU	£63,000
7/2001	IFMA	£14,500
47/2001	IPMS	£42,030

Table A1: Project reference, Union and Funding

Project Number	Union	Funding
New Projects		
32/2001	ISTC	£55,300
73/2001	ISTC	£50,000
117/2001	LAUT	£102,500
133/2001	LAUT	£56,000
58/2001	MSF	£50,556
67/2001	MSF	£33,990
114/2001	MSF	£4,960
115/2001	MSF	£23,800
5/2001	NAPO	£42,500
84/2001	NCTU	£49,717
105/2001	NUJ	£26,800
26/2001	NUT	£473,366
123/2001	NUT	£61,505
44/2001	PCS	£50,000
40/2001	RCN	£60,000
94/2001	RMT	£64,000
98/2001	RMT	£64,000
41/2001	SCP	£30,000
49/2001	T & G	£49,600
60/2001	T & G	£52,800
29/2001	TGWU	£53,050
35/2001	TGWU	£37,500
69/2001	TGWU	£48,790
97/2001	TGWU	£78,300
56/2001	TUC	£10,431
119/2001	TUC	£463,000
89/2001	TUC Education	£145,100
87/2001	TUC Learning Services	£8,920
46/2001	TUC Learning Services - South West	£20,994
72/2001	TUC LS SE	£49,300
91/2001	TUC North West	£62,400
93/2001	TUC Yorks & Hum	£55,000
83/2001	UCATT	£50,000
51/2001	Unifi	£48,800
19/2001	UNISON	£49,540
20/2001	UNISON	£50,000
21/2001	UNISON	£49,000
25/2001	UNISON	£49,000
42/2001	UNISON	£46,220
45/2001	UNISON	£46,000
65/2001	UNISON	£47,500
66/2001	UNISON	£49,444
106/2001	UNISON	£335,000
108/2001	UNISON	£53,500
15/2001	UofTW	£48,675
2/2001	USDAW	£30,700
3/2001	USDAW	£46,500
24/2001	USDAW	£20,500

New Projects

Table A1: Project reference, Union and Funding

Project Number	Union	Funding
New Projects		
90/2001	USDAW	£34,950
126/2001	USDAW	£82,794
31/2001	Various/GMB Lead	£60,500
37/2001	WayAhead Training Ltd	£28,700
Continuation Projects		
04/00	MSF	£57,980
05/00	MSF	£49,060
10/00	TUC BfS NW	£55,500
101/00	UNISON	£55,500
11/00	UCATT	£52,000
25/00	ISTC	£22,025
36/00	TGWU	£50,945
48/00	NATFHE	£14,762
49/00	UNISON	£65,884
51/00	UNISON	£15,900
55/00	GPMU	£45,196
56/00	GPMU	£12,500
58/00	AEEU	£7,500
59/00	AEEU	£6,500
60/00	AEEU	£13,150
62/00	GFTU	£21,500
66/00	AEEU	£2,600
81/00	TGWU	£34,600
84/00	NUJ	£74,500
85/00	AEEU	£55,750
96/00	UNISON	£27,820

Table A2: Project name and Union

Project Number	Union	Project Name
16/2001	AEEU	The AEEU and EMTA Partnership Project
17/2001	AEEU	The Commitment
18/2001	AEEU	Hemsworth First
71/2001	AEEU	Basic Skills Project (Peugeot)
8/2001	ASLEF	Developing Learning in the Rail Industry
22/2001	BECTU	Basic and Key Skills in Theatre
50/2001	BECTU	Skillsformedia for all
57/2001	BFAWU	Building better skills in the Baking Industry
80/2001	BFAWU	Basic and Key Skills in the Baking and Food Industry - Midlands, North East, North West
81/2001	BFAWU	Basic and Key Skills in the Baking and Food Industry - London and South East Region
116/2001	BFAWU	Establishing a learning culture
134/2001	BFAWU	Learning at the New Horizon Centre
14/2001	CATU	Pathway to Lifelong Learning
77/2001	CATU	Basic Skills: Widening Participation
48/2001	CONNECT	A Careers advice service for managers and professionals in the network economy
122/2001	CSEU	Learning centre at V/T shipbuiding division - Southampton
23/2001	CWU	CWU/Post Office/BT/Alliance & Leicester Learning Centre in Liverpool
39/2001	CWU	CWU/BT/Consignia Learning Centres in Birmingham and Coventry
64/2001	CWU	Fujitsu Learning Centre
74/2001	CWU	Open 2 All Learning Centre in Preston
75/2001	CWU	Learning Centres in Hampshire and South Wiltshire
76/2001	CWU	Learning Centres in Dorset and the Isle of Wight
95/2001	CWU	Learning Centre in York
55/2001	CYWU	Life-Learning is for everyone

Table A2: Project name and Union

Project Number	Union	Project Name
63/2001	EDAP	Growth Through Learning
52/2001	EQUITY	Actors Centre North East
36/2001	FBU	Learning Opportunities for the Fire Service
101/2001	FBU	Establishing ICT learning within the Fire Service
4/2001	GMB	GAMBIT
6/2001	GMB	A Recipe for Success
28/2001	GMB	Liverpool City Council Joint Trade Unions Partnership in Learning Project
30/2001	GMB	Basic Skills GMB London Region
62/2001	GMB	Promoting Lifelong Learning
85/2001	GMB	Leicester Learning Links
92/2001	GMB	TRANSFORM
96/2001	GMB	Learning Links - St Helens
102/2001	GMB	A Taste for learning
103/2001	GMB	Learning with GKN
110/2001	GMB	Islington Basic Skills
111/2001	GMB	Norfolk ULF Bid
9/2001	GPMU	Providing Learning, Retraining and Upskilling Opportunities to Workers in ICT
13/2001	GPMU	National Online Learning Strategy
53/2001	GPMU	Developing vocational, key and basic skills in the Greater London printing industry
86/2001	GPMU	Communication Skills Project
104/2001	GPMU	Leicester and East Midlands learning zone
127/2001	GPMU	Learndirect leaning Centre
7/2001	IFMA	Business and IT Skills for the Management of Professional Football Clubs
47/2001	IPMS	Promoting Personal and Career Development for Specialists in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) - Careerplus

Table A2: Project name and Union

Project Number	Union	Project Name
32/2001	ISTC	Lifelong Learning Support Network
73/2001	ISTC	Basic Skills Support Network
117/2001	LAUT	The U-learning partnership
133/2001	LAUT	Meeting the Basic Skill needs of Lancaster University employees
58/2001	MSF	CPHVA CPD ON-LINE
67/2001	MSF	Lifelong Learning in Morecambe Bay Hospitals
114/2001	MSF	Continuing professional development for osteopaths
115/2001	MSF	Skills development programme for HE technical staff
5/2001	NAPO	Certificate in Community Justice
84/2001	NCTU	The Tulip Centre
105/2001	NUJ	NUJ Industry award
26/2001	NUT	Development of ICT Technical Skills for Teachers
123/2001	NUT	Developing a network of learning representatives
44/2001	PCS	Training and Supporting Learning Reps
40/2001	RCN	The Further Development of the RCN Professional Facilitator Newtwork.
94/2001	RMT	Changing Cultures
98/2001	RMT	Passport to Learning
41/2001	SCP	E-Learning for Health Care Professionals
49/2001	T & G	Skills for change
60/2001	T & G	To set up a logistics college for the North West
29/2001	TGWU	Driving Forward the Skills Agenda
35/2001	TGWU	Making Learning and Skills Central to Union Industrial Strategy
69/2001	TGWU	Basic/Key Skills for Staff at Heathrow Airport
97/2001	TGWU	Learning on the Move
56/2001	TUC	Maintaining Leading Edge Developments and the Equal Programme
119/2001	TUC	Trade Union Sector Hub

Table A2: Project name and Union

Project Number	Union	Project Name
89/2001	TUC Education	Equal Pay Pilot
87/2001	TUC Learning Services	Trade Unions and the Investors in People Standard in Schools
46/2001	TUC Learning Services - South West	Union Action on Learning in the Distribution Sector
72/2001	TUC LS SE	Supporting Basic Skills at the Workplace Phase 2
91/2001	TUC North West	Building Union Capacity to Improve Basic Skills in the North West
93/2001	TUC Yorks & Hum	2nd Byte - A programme of Essential Learning Skills for Workers in Humberside
83/2001	UCATT	Basic Skills in Construction and Related Sectors
51/2001	Unifi	Learning support and development on-line
19/2001	UNISON	Development Pathways to Higher Education in Health and Social Care
20/2001	UNISON	Getting Started - Developing Workplace Learning in Local Government
21/2001	UNISON	Group Supported Learning in the Public Service
25/2001	UNISON	Basic Skills/ESOL Year 2
42/2001	UNISON	Workplace Learning in Social Care
45/2001	UNISON	Lifelong Learning and the NHS Plan
65/2001	UNISON	Race to Train
66/2001	UNISON	Race to Mentor
106/2001	UNISON	Extending learning in social care workplaces through the development of learning partnerships
108/2001	UNISON	Preparatory work for April 2002
15/2001	UofTW	Learning with Partners
2/2001	USDAW	Developing a Partnership with TESCO to Promote Lifelong Learning in Distribution and the Retail Sector
3/2001	USDAW	Promoting Lifelong Learning in the Home Shopping Sector and Developing a Learner Rep Network
24/2001	USDAW	Developing a Partnership with Sainsbury's to Promote Lifelong Learning in the Logistics Sector
90/2001	USDAW	Developing Partnerships to Promote Better Basic Skills in the North West

Project Number	Union	Project Name
126/2001	USDAW	Promoting Learndirect in the Home Shopping Sector
31/2001	Various/GMB Lead	Basic Skills Learning Partnership
37/2001	WayAhead Training Ltd	On-Line Learning: A Viable Tool for Management Development
04/00	MSF	Developing a National Network of MSF Learning Reps
05/00	MSF	Support and Guidance for MSF Learning Reps
10/00	TUC BfS NW	Capacity building for workforce development: the trade union role
101/00	UNISON	Race to train
11/00	UCATT	Building Learning - A Sustainable Future
25/00	ISTC	Lifelong Learning Support Network
36/00	TGWU	
48/00	NATFHE	P/T Lecturers and the Institute of Learning and teaching in Higher education membership and staff development needs
49/00	UNISON	Learning Together in Health & Social Care
51/00	UNISON	Building Learning Partnerships in London, Southern, Eastern and South East Regions
55/00	GPMU	South West Initiative for Graphical Training (SIGHT)
56/00	GPMU	Getting the Message Across
58/00	AEEU	ABB Alstom Power
59/00	AEEU	The virtual information resource base at work
60/00	AEEU	Learning with Electrolux
62/00	GFTU	Union Lifelong Learning Champions
66/00	AEEU	Learning Matters
81/00	TGWU	National skills challenge for the Road Haulage Industry
84/00	NUJ	Editorial Computer Skills
85/00	AEEU	Learning Champions of Derbyshire
96/00	UNISON	Promoting Access to Learning - Establishing a Learning Centre

Table A2: Project name and Union