

entrepreneurship and education action plan



contents

page number

Foreword 1

Purpose 3

Background 3

Approach 4

Objectives 7

Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements 8

ANNEX A

Objectives and Associated Actions, Targets and Timescales 11

ANNEX B

Context and Key Reference Material 17

ANNEX C

Definitions 21

ANNEX D

Current and Planned Activity/Gaps and Challenges 23

ANNEX E

Abbreviations 29

foreword

A prosperous economy depends fundamentally upon access to an appropriately skilled and qualified workforce. Our schools, colleges and universities help create that workforce. Indeed, the future success and competitiveness of the local business sector will, to a large extent, be determined by the strengths and capabilities of our young people.

The importance of strengthening the links between the local business and education sectors cannot be overstated. Both sectors have a shared interest in the development, in every learner, of the entrepreneurial skills and attributes which will equip them to make a unique, innovative and creative contribution in the world of work.

With shared interest comes shared responsibility. If the local business sector is to prosper then it must proactively engage with the world of education. If the education sector is to satisfy the demands of modern business and be highly valued, then there must be a clear understanding and communication of exactly what those demands are – and appropriate support in meeting them.

The business and education sectors must work in close partnership if they are to increase the likelihood of achieving their shared aims. Many individuals and organisations have made an important contribution to supporting business/education activities in the past but greater integration and closer working will be needed to ensure that such progress is built on and improved. We need to take stock of where we are now, take account of wider developments both locally and further afield, and then determine how best to move forward in a co-ordinated and structured way.

This Action Plan has been developed by our three Departments, Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), Education (DE) and Employment and Learning (DEL) and is targeted primarily at key stakeholders in the business and education sectors. It establishes an initial framework of agreed and co-ordinated actions to ensure greater synergy, co-operation and understanding between the worlds of business and education.

This Action Plan aims to ensure commonality of understanding and approach and to describe the steps to be taken over the short to medium term to bridge any gaps and identify and address weaknesses in existing systems. It represents a first step towards a longer-term goal of ensuring that all young people in Northern Ireland, regardless of their academic ability, have equal access to a wide range of high quality enterprise learning experiences which help them to develop the skills and attributes needed to reach their full potential in life, and particularly in the world of work.

We fully endorse the aims of this Action Plan and are committed to working in partnership in taking forward the agreed actions.



Ian Pearson, MP
Minister with responsibility for
Enterprise, Trade and Investment



Jane Kennedy, MP
Minister with responsibility for
Education and Employment and Learning

March 2003

purpose

1. Access to an appropriately skilled and qualified workforce is a vital component of a stable economy so there is a real need for effective co-operation between the education and business sectors. Fully integrating entrepreneurship and education will take time and concentrated effort by a range of key stakeholders. In recognition of this, the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), Education (DE) and Employment and Learning (DEL) agreed that **the primary purpose of this Action Plan should be to outline an initial framework of action which would provide a strong foundation for moving forward the process of integration.**
2. This Action Plan is targeted primarily at key stakeholders in the business and education sectors, including those responsible for developing and delivering the curriculum in schools, further education colleges, universities and training organisations; careers advisors; Education and Library Boards (ELBs); organisations currently involved in overseeing and delivering business/education activities and programmes; and organisations with a particular interest in promoting enterprise activity such as Invest NI, the District Councils, Local Strategy Partnerships (LSPs) and business representative organisations.

background

3. The Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government (PfG) 2001-2004 (*) recognised the vital role of education and training in supporting economic development and prosperity and the need to equip young people in particular with the skills, confidence and values to live their lives to the full.
4. The PfG stated that, if Northern Ireland was to secure a skilled workforce capable of meeting both the current and future needs of a modern economy, there was a need to develop and strengthen the existing links between the education system and the world of work. The Executive, therefore, committed to developing an Action Plan to promote greater integration of entrepreneurship and education.
5. The PfG assigned lead responsibility for producing this Action Plan to DETI. In recognition, however, of the key interests and contributions required from other Government Departments, a small inter-Departmental group was established to devise a co-ordinated approach to developing the Action Plan and to ensure that it reflected their many interests. This group included representatives from DETI, DE and DEL.

(*)www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/publications/pfga

approach

6. Every learner, including life-long learners, should be given the opportunity to build the skills and develop the attributes which equip any individual to make a unique, innovative and creative contribution in the world of work and appropriate support systems should be in place to enable them to succeed. **This Action Plan, which will establish benchmarks, is the first stage in a longer-term process and will inform future decision-making.** In recognition of the fact that fully integrating entrepreneurship and education will take time, the three Departments developed and agreed the following approach to:
 - identify and bring together the key players in Northern Ireland;
 - take account of related developments both in Northern Ireland and further afield (see Annex B for details);
 - take stock of, and record, the current and planned activities of key organisations (see Annex D for details);
 - establish a shared and common understanding of what is meant by entrepreneurship (see Paragraph 8 and Annex C for details);
 - ensure that the approaches taken by various organisations are complementary and mutually supportive; and
 - **develop an agreed framework of actions to move the process of integration forward in stages, thereby allowing sufficient time to reflect on wider developments and ensure the ongoing understanding and commitment of key players** (see Annex A for details of specific actions).

equality implications

7. DETI, DE and DEL have responsibilities under equality legislation. This Action Plan does not represent a major change in policy, however, when taking forward specific actions, the Departments will give due consideration to equality implications.

definitions

8. For the purposes of this Action Plan, the three Departments have agreed to consider entrepreneurship, in its widest possible sense, as **the ability of an individual, possessing a range of essential skills and attributes, to make a unique, innovative and creative contribution in the world of work, whether in employment or self-employment**. Further information on definitions is provided at Annex C.

entrepreneurial skills and attributes

9. The entrepreneurial skills and attributes the three Departments wish to see developed in all learners are detailed below. The attributes include:
 - enterprise;
 - creativity;
 - self-belief;
 - energy;
 - initiative; and
 - a disciplined and positive attitude to work, with a keen desire for continual improvement.
10. The skills required include:
 - the ability to work effectively both in teams and on one's own initiative;
 - the capacity to be innovative and to think creatively, developing and implementing new ideas and new ways of doing things;
 - the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge to different problems and situations;

- the capacity to make reasonable risk/reward assessments and act upon them; and
 - the flexibility and personal resilience to adapt and respond positively to changing circumstances.
11. DE and DEL are committed to developing, across all aspects of education and training, a range of "key skills" which are considered vital to the wider issue of employability. These are:
- communication;
 - application of number;
 - problem-solving;
 - information technology;
 - working with others; and
 - improving own learning.
12. **The skills and attributes described above can, and should, be fostered in every learner, from the youngest primary school child to the university graduate and, indeed, the life-long learner.** While they are appropriate for every worker, they are essential for those who would own or manage successful business enterprises. The future prosperity of society depends on all of our young people, including the brightest and best - and their parents - coming to regard the business sector, and in particular setting up their own business, as a valid and realistic career option. This Action Plan will work towards making that culture shift a reality.
13. It is recognised that both the business and education sectors have a contribution to make, not only in fostering these skills and attributes, but also in encouraging the culture shift towards entrepreneurship and each sector will place demands on the other to secure the degree of integration necessary to bolster a robust economy. The education system cannot deliver an appropriately skilled workforce without a suitable level of engagement and interaction with the business community to communicate the needs of business and to support programmes within schools, colleges and universities aimed at meeting those needs.
14. The importance of effective interaction between the education and business sectors has been recognised for some time and there are examples of existing good practice in this area. In preparing this Action Plan, current and planned activities have been considered in order to identify the gaps and challenges which must be addressed to achieve the greater cohesion envisaged by the Programme for Government (see Annex D for details).

objectives

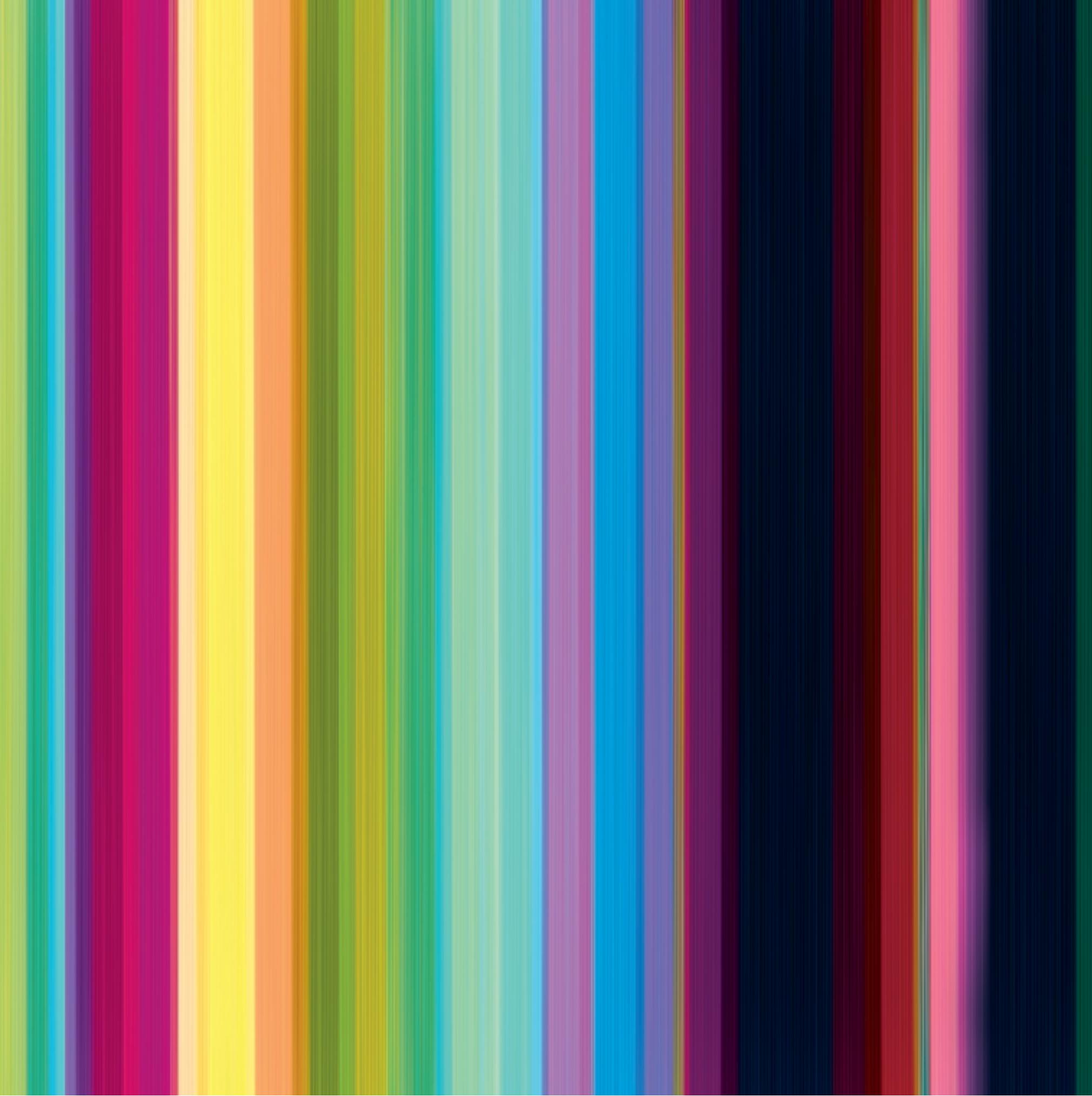
15. It will take time and concentrated effort by a range of key stakeholders to address many of the complex issues identified in developing this Action Plan. The three Departments have identified five objectives and an underlying series of actions to be taken in order to recognise and raise awareness of the many difficulties to be faced and to gain the co-operation of the key players involved in agreeing the way forward in the short to medium term. The agreed objectives for this initial stage are to:
- evaluate government funding of business/education activities;
 - embed entrepreneurial skills across the curriculum;
 - promote awareness of entrepreneurship;
 - provide support for those required to deliver skills training; and
 - promote wider recognition and acceptance of vocational qualifications and work-related learning programmes.

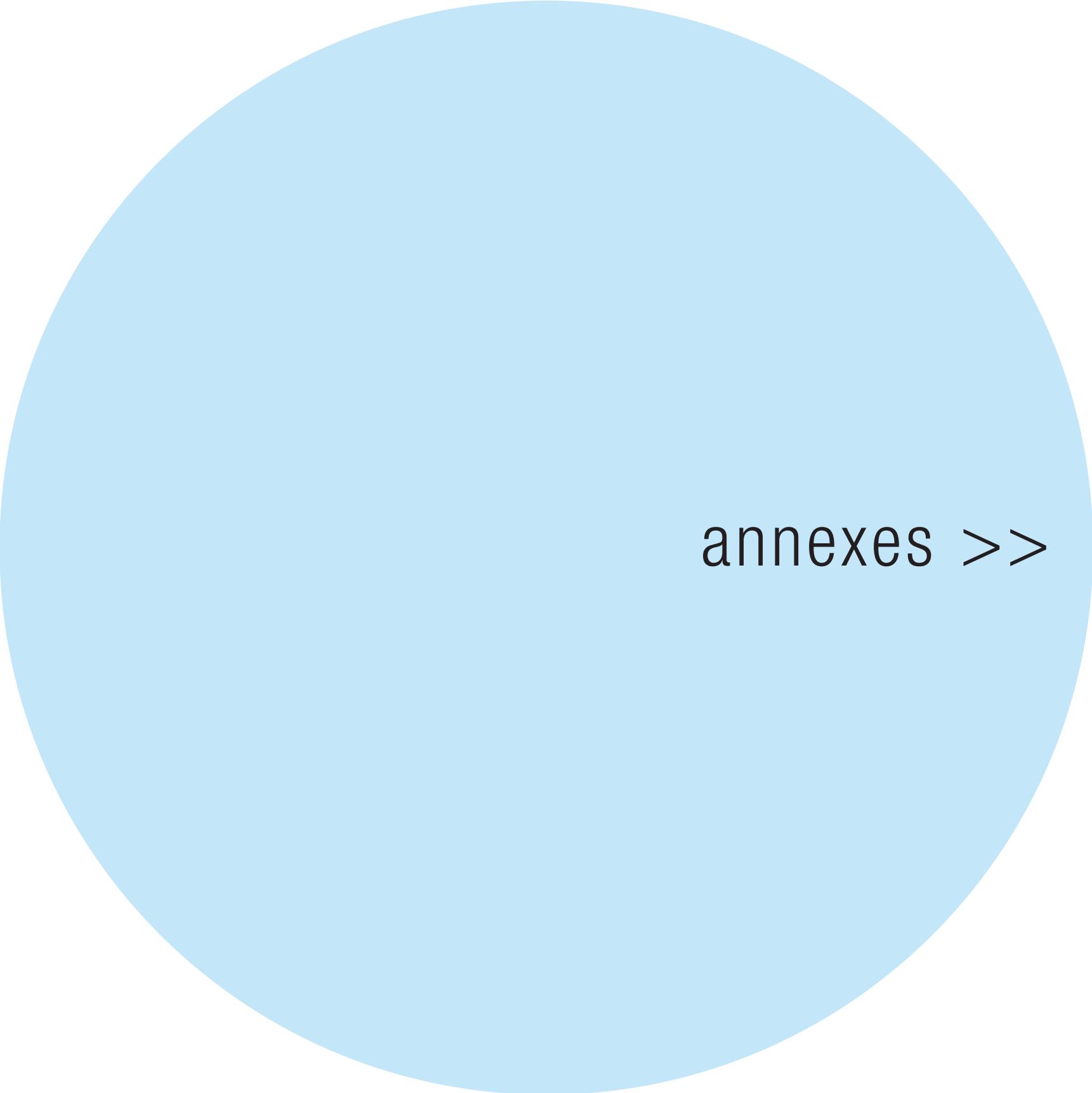
The supporting actions in pursuit of these objectives are listed in Annex A.

16. Moving this exercise forward will essentially be a two-way process which will require greater interaction and a shared understanding of the issues by those working in both the business and education sectors. In order to make informed decisions for future action, it will be important to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of current practices and to identify and put in place measures to improve these. Initial data can also be gathered to identify the number of students and business organisations taking part in such activities and, through survey work, identify the extent to which they have each benefited from these. It will also be important to consider ways in which to influence and bring together other organisations with a shared interest in promoting closer working between the two sectors such as business representative organisations and District Councils.

monitoring and reporting arrangements

17. Given the keen interest of DETI, DEL and DE in the issues addressed in this Action Plan, the three Departments will continue to work closely, and in association with their respective Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs), in overseeing its implementation. An inter-Departmental group will meet on a regular basis and reports on progress and outcomes will be made to each Departmental Board. Progress will be reviewed on an annual basis and will include taking account of any significant developments relating to the various ongoing activities listed at Annex B.
18. Strong leadership will be required to ensure that this issue is afforded appropriate importance and profile in the years ahead. Each Department will continue to promote the benefits of strengthening business/education links within their respective Departments and the wider circles in which they each operate. Specifically, steps will be taken to achieve stronger co-ordination and effectiveness of delivery of outputs from the various bodies involved in the business/education network. Through their membership of the Economic Development Forum, DETI and DEL will endeavour to secure and facilitate the active participation of the major social partners and, in particular, the business representative organisations.





annexes >>

annex a

objective one: evaluate government funding of business/education activities

PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD DEPARTMENT	DELIVERY AGENT	TARGET	TIMESCALE
<p>1.1 Evaluate the impact of government-funded business education activities through a review of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the roles and remits of the Northern Ireland Business Education Partnership (NIBEP) and the provider bodies; and ■ the quality of engagement in support of business education and entrepreneurship from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the business sector; ● the education sector; and ● Government. 	DE and DEL	Inter-Departmental Group involving DE, DEL, DETI and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM).	<p>Commission evaluation.</p> <p>Produce report and recommendations with a focus on clarifying the roles and remits of key stakeholders and identifying best practice.</p>	<p>April 2003</p> <p>December 2003</p>
1.2 Review the activities of the Northern Ireland Centre for Entrepreneurship (NICENT) with a view to defining the impact of the organisation's activities and, where possible, disseminating best practice.	Invest NI	Invest NI, supported by DEL.	<p>Commission evaluation.</p> <p>Produce report and recommendations with a particular focus on identifying best practice in science and technology for wider dissemination across the Higher Education curriculum.</p>	<p>April 2003</p> <p>August 2003</p>

objective two: embed entrepreneurship across the curriculum

PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD DEPARTMENT	DELIVERY AGENT	TARGET	TIMESCALE
2.1 Ensure curriculum development policy takes account of the needs of the economy and the local business sector with a particular focus on developing enterprise, economic and business understanding and financial literacy in all young people.	DE	Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and DE, supported by DETI, Invest NI, DEL and ELBs.	Introduce a programme of preparation for the world of work, including fostering the development of entrepreneurial skills and attributes, into the curriculum as an entitlement for all pupils.	In line with timescales for introducing revised statutory curriculum.
2.2 Develop assessment arrangements by which progress in pupils' acquisition of entrepreneurial skills and attributes can be assessed.	DE	CCEA supported by ELBs and in consultation with NIBEP and provider bodies.	Establish a working group to agree the range of skills and attributes to be assessed. Develop assessment and examination procedures which will be appropriately based in practical work.	Pilot along with other initiatives in line with timescales for introducing revised statutory curriculum.
2.3 Encourage schools, colleges and universities to promote self-employment as a valid and equal career option.	DEL	DEL, supported by Invest NI and business representative organisations.	Wide use of available promotional material (see 3.1). Workshops led by local role models (see 2.4 and 3.5).	March 2004 March 2004
2.4 Establish a dedicated team of local entrepreneurship champions (i.e. business people and educationalists with an interest in entrepreneurship) to facilitate and nurture the spirit of enterprise within schools, colleges and universities.	DE and DEL	NIBEP and provider bodies, supported by Invest NI.	Establish a team of local entrepreneurship champions.	March 2004

objective three: promote awareness of entrepreneurship

PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD DEPARTMENT	DELIVERY AGENT	TARGET	TIMESCALE
3.1 Promote awareness of the key entrepreneurial skills and attributes needed to be successful in any career.	DE and DEL	DE and DEL, supported by Invest NI, NIBEP and provider bodies.	Liaise with business representative organisations to design and produce an information leaflet. Distribute to schools, colleges and universities.	September 2003 September 2003
3.2 Greater emphasis on entrepreneurship to be incorporated into accurate and timely career information provided to young people in order to encourage a culture shift towards entrepreneurship.	DEL	Business education provider bodies supported by DE and DEL's Careers Service.	DEL's Careers Occupational Information Unit (COIU) to review its published and distributed information on entrepreneurship. COIU to increase the breadth and depth of its published information on entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship awareness-raising to be incorporated into Careers Service staff training - particularly through occupational information training supported by a programme of themed employer visits.	September 2003 31 March 2004 31 March 2004
3.3 Consult with, and gain the support of, business representative organisations to encourage greater debate and communication of the needs of business.	DETI	Economic Development Forum (EDF).	Secure the engagement of business representative organisations and reflect in the EDF medium term strategic priorities (MTSPs) Action Plan.	MTSPs Action Plan to be produced by March 2003. Impact of additional actions to be reviewed annually by EDF.
3.4 Initiate a change in attitudes and perceptions about entrepreneurship including promoting awareness of the broad definition within business/industry.	Invest NI	Accelerating Entrepreneurship Strategy (AES).	Develop a promotional campaign under the AES to achieve attitudinal change in the community, including the business sector.	Ongoing – the impact of the campaign will be measured on an annual basis through the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor and through regular engagement with the business community.

objective three: promote awareness of entrepreneurship *continued*

PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD DEPARTMENT	DELIVERY AGENT	TARGET	TIMESCALE
3.5 Change attitudes by raising the profile of local success stories.	Invest NI	Invest NI, supported by DEL and business representative organisations and in conjunction with Local Strategy Partnerships (LSPs) and District Councils.	Continual regional awareness campaign, profiling Northern Ireland role models and success stories - including people, businesses and products - utilising all aspects of the media including television and newspapers.	Ongoing, commencing June 2003.
3.6 Include a high profile award for enterprise, across all sectors, in the annual Northern Ireland business summit proposed by EDF.	EDF	To be agreed by EDF.	Develop high profile award for enterprise.	In line with timescales agreed by EDF.
3.7 Raise awareness of, and stimulate, entrepreneurial behaviour within local communities, encouraging participation from all parts of society.	Invest NI	Invest NI, supported by LSPs and District Councils.	Develop, and include in Integrated Local Strategies, initiatives/projects enabling local communities to understand business through practical experience.	From June 2003, commence a rolling programme of projects/initiatives.
3.8 Undertake a study of the impact of activity on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ attitudes towards entrepreneurs; and ■ attitudes towards being an entrepreneur at a future date. 	Invest NI	Invest NI.	Report on results of study into impact of activity on attitudes to entrepreneurship.	December 2003

objective four: provide support for those required to deliver skills training

PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD DEPARTMENT	DELIVERY AGENT	TARGET	TIMESCALE
4.1 Raise awareness among those currently in teaching, of the importance of developing entrepreneurial skills and attributes across the curriculum and an appreciation that this is not simply a 'careers' issue.	DE	DE, supported by business representative organisations, Invest NI and CCEA.	Workshop for head teachers, college principals.	In line with timescales for introducing revised statutory curriculum.
4.2 Develop and pilot a comprehensive range of sample teaching plans and teaching and assessment materials to support delivery of entrepreneurial skills.	DE and DEL	CCEA, supported by DE and DEL.	Develop, pilot and then manage the introduction of new teaching materials.	In line with timescales for introducing revised statutory curriculum.
4.3 Work closely with universities and ELBs to ensure a co-ordinated approach to enterprise and entrepreneurial skills training for teachers across Northern Ireland.	DE and DEL	CCEA, supported by DE and DEL.	To be discussed with stakeholders when details of the revised curriculum are known.	In line with timescales for introducing revised statutory curriculum.
4.4 Develop a guide to enterprise education detailing all current programmes applicable to primary school children up to university level students.	DE, DEL and Invest NI	DE, DEL, Invest NI and NIBEP, in consultation with provider bodies.	Develop and maintain a programme database.	March 2004
4.5 A scheme to be established to provide college principals with boardroom experience.	EDF	Business Alliance.	In line with targets set by Business Alliance and agreed by EDF.	In line with timescale agreed by EDF.

objective five: promote wider recognition and acceptance of vocational qualifications and work-related learning programmes

PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD DEPARTMENT	DELIVERY AGENT	TARGET	TIMESCALE
5.1 Raise awareness with major local employers and universities.	DEL	DEL, supported by Invest NI.	Organise workshop for employers/human resource managers.	January 2004
5.2 Encourage debate among, and seek endorsement of, major social partners.	DETI	EDF.	Paper to EDF.	June 2003



context and key reference material

1. This Action Plan has been developed at a time of great activity in the field of entrepreneurship and related issues, both in Northern Ireland and beyond.
2. This Annex provides a summary of such activities, all of which are at varying stages of development/implementation. Some are in their infancy; others will result in new approaches being taken in the near future; others will involve the 'piloting' of initiatives to test their impact and effectiveness; while others are being developed with longer-term impacts in mind.
3. The environment within which this Action Plan has been developed is, therefore, ever changing and there will be a need to revisit it periodically to take account of progress and make appropriate adjustments to reflect lessons learned elsewhere.

Northern Ireland

- Publication, by the Economic Development Forum (EDF), of a series of medium term strategic priorities to be addressed by all sectors if the Northern Ireland economy is to be significantly strengthened during the period to the year 2010. The EDF publication, *Working Together for a Stronger Economy*, launched on 20 June 2002, recognises the importance of strengthening links between the business and education sectors and of ensuring that the Northern Ireland workforce is equipped with appropriate skills to support the current and future needs of the economy (www.edfni.com).
- Work by Northern Ireland's new economic development agency, Invest NI, to develop *Accelerating Entrepreneurship - a strategy to increase business start up and growth*, published for consultation in January 2003 and to be formally launched in May 2003. The aims of the strategy are to accelerate entrepreneurship, increase the number of business start-ups and provide a responsive network of support to meet the needs of all new business start-ups (<http://www.investni.com/mainsite/showpicture.asp?CID=1580&type=DOCUMENT§ion=SUMMARY>).
- The *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM)*, *Northern Ireland 2002* establishes benchmarks in respect of the contribution made by education to levels of entrepreneurship (<http://www.investni.com/mainsite/showpicture.asp?CID=1555&type=DOCUMENT§ion=SUMMARY>).

- DETI's preparation of *think | create | innovate* - the Regional Innovation Strategy for Northern Ireland - which recognises the importance of creating a culture of innovation and enterprise and the need for closer working between the private sector, Government and universities (<http://www.detini.gov.uk/thinkcreateinnovate>).
- A major review of the statutory curriculum being undertaken by DE and the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) which, it is anticipated, will result in the staged introduction of a revised curriculum, with greater emphasis on education for employability, starting from September 2004.
- The DEL-led Further Education Review which is being conducted in two phases. The first phase (which will underpin the rest of the study) relates to the role of the statutory Further Education (FE) sector. Consultation on Phase One, aimed at gaining as wide a consensus as possible on the role of the statutory FE sector, has ended and responses are being considered. When the role of the FE sector has been determined, the second phase will involve a wider consideration of issues such as funding and governance, the relationship with other Departmental policies and size and structures. The overall aim of the Review is to publish a clear and comprehensive strategy for the statutory FE sector, setting out the direction and targets etc. for the next ten years.
- Work by the DEL-led Employability Taskforce to examine the factors that make people employable and to seek views on how obstacles to employment might be overcome. The *Employability Taskforce Report and Action Plan* was launched by the Minister with responsibility for Employment and Learning on 16 December 2002 (http://www.delni.gov.uk/docs/pdf/Taskforce_dec2002.pdf).
- Report on the Review of Careers Education and Guidance* by Professor Sean Fulton (the Fulton Review) commissioned by DE and DEL to examine and make recommendations on careers information and guidance needs in Northern Ireland. The report (to be published in March 2003 after a consultation exercise) recognises the need for an enhanced careers guidance system built on curricular support, business education links and use of Information Communications Technology (ICT).
- The Household Entrepreneurship Survey*, published by Invest NI in December 2002, concluded that Northern Ireland is characterised by very low levels of enterprise activity. There are concerns about the quality of new and existing small businesses in Northern Ireland and there are generally low levels of usage of business support/business networks (<http://www.investni.com/mainsite/showpicture.asp?CID=1554&type=DOCUMENT§ion=SUMMARY>).

annex b

- Essential Skills for Living, Equipped for the Future: Building for Tomorrow* published by DEL in April 2002 which sets out the framework and actions for a strategy to improve the essential skills of literacy and numeracy in Northern Ireland (www.delni.gov.uk/docs/pdf/essential_skills_for_living.pdf).
- The Northern Ireland Ageing Population Panel Report 2001* which outlines key opportunities and challenges and identifies actions to ensure that Northern Ireland companies are aware of the implications of the Age Shift (www.ageconcernni.org/pages/Foresight02a.pdf).
- The International Council for Small Business 48th World Conference on the theme of "Advancing Entrepreneurship and Small Business" which is to be held in Belfast in June 2003 (www.isbauk.org/events.htm).

United Kingdom

- The UK review, by Howard Davies, of *Enterprise and the Economy in Education*, published in February 2002, and related developments by Scottish Enterprise and the Welsh Development Agency (WDA). Following the Davies Review, the Chancellor of the Exchequer expressed his support to promoting enterprise education in schools and colleges (www.daviesreview.org; www.scottish-enterprise.com/; www.wda.co.uk).
- The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) *White Paper on 14-19 Strategy (Opportunity and Excellence)* which addresses issues around school-to-work transition and enterprise and seeks to implement the recommendations set out in the Howard Davies review (www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19).
- Work currently being carried out by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) on the *Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework* aimed at providing a comprehensive, strategic approach to the development of women's enterprise in the UK.
- The UK Paper *Enterprise for All* which highlights education and training as being one of the main barriers facing small to medium size enterprises (SMEs) in the European Union today (www.sbs.gov.uk/content/consultations/EnterpriseforAll_final.pdf).
- The review of SMEs in the UK *Small Firms: Big Business!* produced by the Small Business Service which provides an overview of the small business sector (<http://www.sbs.gov.uk/>).

Republic of Ireland

- Entrepreneurship in Ireland* (also known as the Goodbody Report) commissioned in the Republic of Ireland by Forfas, the National Competitiveness Council, Enterprise Ireland and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and published in November 2002. This research is aimed at identifying motivators and eliminating barriers to entrepreneurship (<http://www.forfas.ie/ncc/index.htm>).

Europe

- The *Final Report of the Expert Group Best Procedure Project on Education and Training for Entrepreneurship* published in November 2002. This is one of eleven Best Procedure studies currently being undertaken by the Enterprise Directorate of the European Commission aimed at improving the environment for enterprise. All 16 Member States have been involved in reviewing and assessing current measures (www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/support_measures/training_education/index.htm).
- The Green Paper *Entrepreneurship in Europe* published by the European Commission in January 2003 asked questions under three areas for action: bringing down barriers to business development and growth; balancing the risks and rewards of entrepreneurship; and a society that values entrepreneurship (www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/green_paper/).

definitions

1. There are almost as many definitions of entrepreneurship as there are people defining the word.
2. Many academics have studied the semantics in some detail, for example, a recent study by the Regional Studies Association (McQuaid R W (2002) - Reg Studies 36, 909-919) identified at least five main groups of overlapping perspectives on entrepreneurship. These reflect entrepreneurship as (i) a function in the economy; (ii) a new business start-up; (iii) an owner-manager of a small business (or small to medium size enterprise); (iv) a set of personal characteristics; and (v) a form of behaviour.
3. Other publications, such as the *Enterprise Guide* sourced by the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), contain references to both enterprise and entrepreneurialism. The Guide defines 'enterprise' as a set of attributes, skills and attitudes that enable people to create and thrive on change and 'enterprise education' as considered necessary to enable pupils to develop confidence, self-reliance and willingness to embrace change. The Enterprise Guide defines 'entrepreneurialism' as the creation of wealth through the development of new and small businesses.
4. Individuals and organisations will necessarily adopt the definition which most accurately reflects their particular interests or perspective. For example, Invest NI's Accelerating Entrepreneurship Strategy (AES), which aims to "make Northern Ireland an exemplar location for starting and growing a successful business", rightly focuses on entrepreneurship in relation to business start-ups and wealth creation. To achieve this vision, AES identifies priorities to:
 - initiate a change of attitudes and perceptions about entrepreneurship;
 - encourage more people to take the first steps in thinking about establishing a business venture;
 - support those with ideas who have the potential to create wealth in priority sectors;
 - create an infrastructure that enables global knowledge based, innovative start-ups to progress and grow rapidly; and
 - optimise use of electronic media to disseminate information, advice and best practice.

5. The AES, using the internationally accepted Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) definition, defines entrepreneurship as:

"Any attempt at new business or venture creation, such as self employment, a new business organisation, or the expansion of an existing business organisation by an individual, teams of individuals, or established businesses".

6. An individual entrepreneur is defined as:

"Someone who pursues opportunities beyond known resources to create wealth".

7. Despite the many possible interpretations of entrepreneurship, and what may appear overlapping or conflicting definitions of enterprise, it is clear that there is a great deal of common ground. It was not, therefore, considered necessary, or indeed practical, in this Action Plan to undertake a detailed analysis of the various theories put forward on this complex and often subjective topic.
8. Clarity of definition is, nevertheless, vital to ensure mutual understanding and commonality of approach. For the purposes of this Action Plan, the three Departments have agreed to consider entrepreneurship, in its widest possible sense, as **the ability of an individual, possessing a range of essential skills and attributes, to make a unique, innovative and creative contribution in the world of work, whether in employment or self-employment**.

current and planned activity/gaps and challenges

1. Key Government Departments are currently involved in a range of activities aimed at promoting greater integration of entrepreneurship and education. These current and planned activities are summarised in Paragraphs 2-15 below. A review of these activities identified a number of potential gaps in activity/provision and further details on these can be found in Paragraphs 16-20 below.

Northern Ireland Business Education Partnership (NIBEP)

2. DEL and DE are actively involved in supporting the activities of NIBEP. Through a range of provider bodies, NIBEP is introducing a wider concept of entrepreneurship to pupils and teachers by co-ordinating and delivering Business/Enterprise Education programmes. NIBEP has a range of projects under way - from programmes to enable primary school pupils to understand the economic world using business advisors and teachers, to programmes for Further Education students involving insights into management, micro-business challenges and using interactive and distance learning to target students. Business Education Partnerships are active in all council areas and provide an important local focus on business education activities.

Provider Bodies

Young Enterprise Northern Ireland (YENI)

3. YENI offers a wide variety of programmes designed for a range of age groups, ability levels and social circumstances. All programmes enable students to learn about and experience business. Programmes are appropriate for students from the ages of 4 through to 24 and include the running of mini-businesses and delivery of personal development skills training to over 20,000 school students each year.

Shell Livewire (NI)

4. Shell Livewire helps 16 to 30 year olds to start and develop their own business and hosts a national competition for new business start-ups. It provides information, advice and practical support, as well as one-to-one advice, through a national network of local business advisers and young business mentors. In Northern Ireland, Shell Livewire (NI) provides information and awareness on entrepreneurship in schools and colleges.

Sentinus

5. Sentinus was formed by the merger of the Northern Ireland Science and Technology Regional Organisation (NISTRO) and Industry Matters. Through its goal of 'developing through experience', Sentinus offers business education activity to young people in two broad areas (i) developing interpersonal skills and positive attitudes to work; and (ii) enlightening young people about the challenges and opportunities presented by science, technology and engineering.

Northern Ireland Centre for Entrepreneurship (NICENT)

6. DETI and DEL work with NICENT which was developed by the University of Ulster, in partnership with Queen's University Belfast, as part of their reformed Regional Development focus. NICENT is one of 12 world-class centres of excellence established throughout the UK as a result of the Science Enterprise Challenge. NICENT, which receives funding from the UK Office of Science and Technology and Invest NI, aims to promote a culture of entrepreneurship through curriculum development, provide support to individuals who have the potential to make new knowledge-based ventures successful and, in particular, drive, promote and support entrepreneurship in science and technology subjects.
7. The first major development in their Entrepreneurship Training Programme is the NICENT Entrepreneurship Module, which has been introduced to promote a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation in the science and technology subjects in the University of Ulster. Both Northern Ireland universities are committed to developing a culture of entrepreneurship within the university community and realise the importance of appropriate entrepreneurship training for staff. Staff training and development is in place to successfully roll out the entrepreneurship programmes to students.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

8. Through its work with the Economic Development Forum (EDF), DETI plays a key role in promoting and raising awareness of the importance of strengthening business/education links both within Government and the wider social partner organisations represented on the Forum. Enterprise was one of the seven medium term strategic priorities published by the Forum in June 2002 with an objective to create a culture and environment which supports and encourages enterprise and entrepreneurial activity. The subsequent EDF Action Plan, published in March 2003, identified the following key outcomes in relation to Enterprise:
- increasing the level of start-ups;
 - a rebalanced financial incentives package and an increased role for private equity finance and business angels; and
 - the creation of a more supportive culture for enterprise (including business/education links) and greater celebration of the achievement of successful Northern Ireland entrepreneurs.

Department for Employment and Learning

Further Education (FE) Sector

9. DEL actively supports key skills (set out in Page 6) across all its 16 to 19 programmes, mainstream FE and Jobskills. Such skills include the ability to think creatively and develop initiative, as well as the ability to work with others and solve problems. DEL has also put in place four pilot programmes to examine how the FE sector can support small to medium size enterprises (SMEs). The twin aims of these programmes are to improve the business performance of participating SMEs and to enhance the relevance of the FE curriculum to the needs of SMEs. This will be achieved by:
- utilising the expertise of FE colleges to assist SMEs;
 - increasing SMEs' profitability and growth;
 - increasing the competitiveness of SMEs;
 - reviewing and developing curriculum activity to meet the needs of the local economy; and
 - equipping FE students with the qualifications, skills and competences to participate in economic development and work in the SME sector.

10. DEL has asked the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to identify the elements of business literacy and business awareness which are included in the key vocational areas such as engineering, construction, media, hospitality and health and social care with a view to highlighting gaps in knowledge.
11. Careers Officers from DEL are professionally qualified to post-graduate level and provide a careers information and guidance service to school pupils, college students, Jobskills trainees and those young people who are not engaged in education, training or employment. Careers Officers help young people to make informed decisions about their career pathways and can play an important role in providing advice and information relating to the activities of this Action Plan.
12. DEL's Careers Occupational Information Unit (COIU) provides careers information in a range of formats across Northern Ireland. COIU has a distribution list of approximately 500 organisations including all post primary schools, FE Colleges and Training Organisations. COIU can support the promotion of enterprise by offering a distribution service and awareness-raising service through its bi-monthly newsletter.

Higher Education (HE) Sector

13. DEL's support of university research is aimed at both improving the standing of Northern Ireland universities and enhancing their capacity to contribute to wider social and economic development. In January 2000, DEL introduced the Higher Reach Out to Business and the Community (HEROBC) Fund aimed at ensuring that higher education is responsive to the needs of business and industry. This provides core funding to help universities develop and implement strategic approaches to their relationships with business and the transfer of knowledge and skills. Both universities are undertaking a range of initiatives under the programme including establishing a new office within each institution to act as a focus for all collaborative work with industry.
14. The HEROBC programme is currently being reviewed and refocused as the HE Innovation Fund/HE Active Community Fund. As part of this, DEL will discuss with the universities how they can further contribute to the promotion of entrepreneurship.

Department of Education

15. The Department of Education has introduced an initiative to encourage work-related learning for young people aged 14 to 16. This scheme allows schools to 'disapply' areas of the curriculum and introduce pupils to vocational and work-related learning. This typically involves, in Years 11 and 12, three days a week in school, plus a day a week in further education or training and a day a week in a real or simulated work environment. In 2002/03, over 70 schools are offering these courses to some 3,500 pupils. Inspectorate evaluation has indicated real improvements in the young people's motivation, enjoyment and engagement with their learning, usually leading to occupational or pre-vocational qualifications. The challenge for schools now is to make the school-based curriculum more consistent with the young people's experiences in their two days of courses off-site. The Department has also increased access to vocational qualifications and, through its work with NIBEP, has taken steps to introduce both pupils and teachers to the wider concept of entrepreneurship.

gaps and challenges

16. In considering potential gaps in activity/provision, two fundamental issues were identified as needing to be resolved, as follows:
- (i) in many instances, entrepreneurship activities in the education sector tend to be focused on business students. There is a need to broaden this considerably to include initiatives which will engage other vocational areas such as construction, engineering, Information Communications Technology (ICT) etc; and
 - (ii) there is a need to decide who is responsible for delivery of activities to promote entrepreneurship within the education sector - this should not be perceived as falling solely within the remit of careers teachers.
17. One of the key challenges to be faced in securing the degree of integration of entrepreneurship and education envisaged in the Programme for Government, is the need to obtain widely shared acceptance of the broad definition of entrepreneurship described in Paragraph 8 on Page 5. Students, teachers, policy makers and business organisations must align activities to support the definition and focus on the key components of initiative and risk management in order to develop entrepreneurial skills in every vocational area.

18. It will be equally important to promote a greater understanding and acceptance within business organisations of the value of vocational qualifications and work-related learning programmes so that these are seen to be on a par with academic qualifications and valued in terms of developing future entrepreneurs.
19. The skills and attributes required for entrepreneurship must be fostered right across the curriculum and across all subject areas. This will require appropriately skilled pedagogy just as much as, or perhaps more than, lesson content.
20. Appropriate support must also be provided for those responsible for delivering skills training and the expertise of those in business must be fully utilised to ensure this is addressed in a realistic way. Teachers must be afforded greater opportunities to develop their understanding of business issues and needs and, in recognition of the sheer size of the education population, innovative ways must be found of introducing these to all students.

abbreviations

AES	Accelerating Entrepreneurship Strategy	GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
Business Alliance	The Business Alliance is an informal grouping of the four key business organisations in Northern Ireland: CBI, Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Institute of Directors and Centre for Competitiveness	HEROBC	Higher Reach Out to Business and the Community
CCEA	Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment	ICT	Information Communications Technology
COIU	Careers Occupational Information Unit	InterTradeIreland	One of the North/South Implementation Bodies, established under the Good Friday Agreement, dealing with cross-border trade and business development
DCAL	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure	LSPs	Local Strategy Partnerships
DE	Department of Education	MTSPs	Medium term strategic priorities
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning	NDPBs	Non-Departmental Public Bodies
DETI	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	NIBEP	Northern Ireland Business Education Partnership
DfES	Department for Education and Skills	NICENT	Northern Ireland Centre for Entrepreneurship
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry	NISTRO	Northern Ireland Science and Technology Regional Organisation
EDF	Economic Development Forum	OFMDFM	The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
ELBs	Education and Library Boards	PfG	Programme for Government
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate	SMEs	Small to medium size enterprises i.e. a company employing less than 250 people
FE	Further Education	WDA	Welsh Development Agency
		YENI	Young Enterprise Northern Ireland