



Implementing IS Strategy through Best Practice Programme Management

Challenge

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has the challenge of raising the number of learners, and levels of attainment, in training and higher education (excluding universities) for all over-16s in England.

A major challenge for the LSC was dealing with the day to day demands of meeting the IS needs of training partners, as well as looking to the longer term to meet the needs of the organisation over the medium to long term and the IS strategy.

Steria was invited to support the LSC as a result of its long relationship with the Department for Education and Skills. Following a successful competitive bid for the provision of IS services, Steria has been involved in three phases of the LSC's evolution, from initial inception, subsequent consolidation and the current reshaping programme. Steria helped the LSC to define their business strategy and corresponding IT strategy. Today, solutions from Steria help LSC support over 4 million learners.

Response

As programme and project management experts Steria Learning Services were engaged to carry out programme and project board briefings for the LSC's key managers.

As a result of the success of these we were asked to manage the establishment of a programme of work to deliver the IS Strategy. The LSC had taken a decision to manage all projects using PRINCE2™ best practice project management. In order to develop the programme management infrastructure we used the programme management guidance from the Office of Government Commerce – Managing Successful Programmes.

As PRINCE2™ and MSP™ experts it was a natural decision to set up the programme implementation as a project (using PRINCE2™) to deliver the programme infrastructure. The initial scoping of the deliverables was to take the programme through identification and definition. Since ownership of the ongoing process was important, the key players in the programme management team were involved in the Programme Definition Team, including the ongoing programme manager. This was a challenge since that programme management team also had to deal with the ongoing

management of a portfolio of projects to meet the annual targets.

Steria brought in some specialist resources to help in the short-term as the new infrastructure was developed and to provide key skills such as facilitators for future state workshops necessary to lead the programme towards the strategic IS goals.

There were a number of stakeholders around the IS Strategy that need to become engaged with the new process – some existing and some new such as a new chief executive. There were already a number of boards set up to coordinate projects in different business areas. These had to have a number of interventions to explain the needs of programme, as opposed to multiple project, management and to change their existing terms of reference.

The existing boards were refocused on to business case and benefits management and the need to prepare their business areas for project implementation and then drive out the business benefits.

Other deliverables concerned the creation of the governance arrangements for the rest of the programme to use, such as, risk issue and quality management and the establishment of an overall plan and monitoring process.

A critical deliverable was a definition of the organisation as it would look once the IS Strategy had been achieved.

A future state visioning workshop was held to develop the blueprint and engage with key stakeholders. An ongoing review process was also designed to keep the blueprint and IS strategy in alignment with the changing business environment.

As a result of the future state visioning a number of strategic projects were defined that were scheduled into a Programme plan

Outcome

As a major strategic investment for a government organisation this programme was subject to a Gateway Review the objective of this was to:

- ➔ Review the outcomes and objectives for the programme (and the way they fit together)



- Ensure that the programme is supported by key stakeholders
- Review the arrangements for leading, managing and monitoring the programme
- Review the arrangements for identifying and managing the main programme risks
- Check that financial provision has been made for the programme and that plans for the work to be done through to the next stage are realistic, properly resourced with sufficient people of appropriate experience, and authorised

The project was completed when the new Programme Board accepted its new Terms of Reference and began the process of managing the overall programme. The revised boards took on their business case and benefits management roles and the first of the strategic projects were initiated.

Subsequently the programme went through the strategic Gateway Review facilitated by external government departments and “passed” with flying colours. The process of delivering strategy not tactical solutions had begun.

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