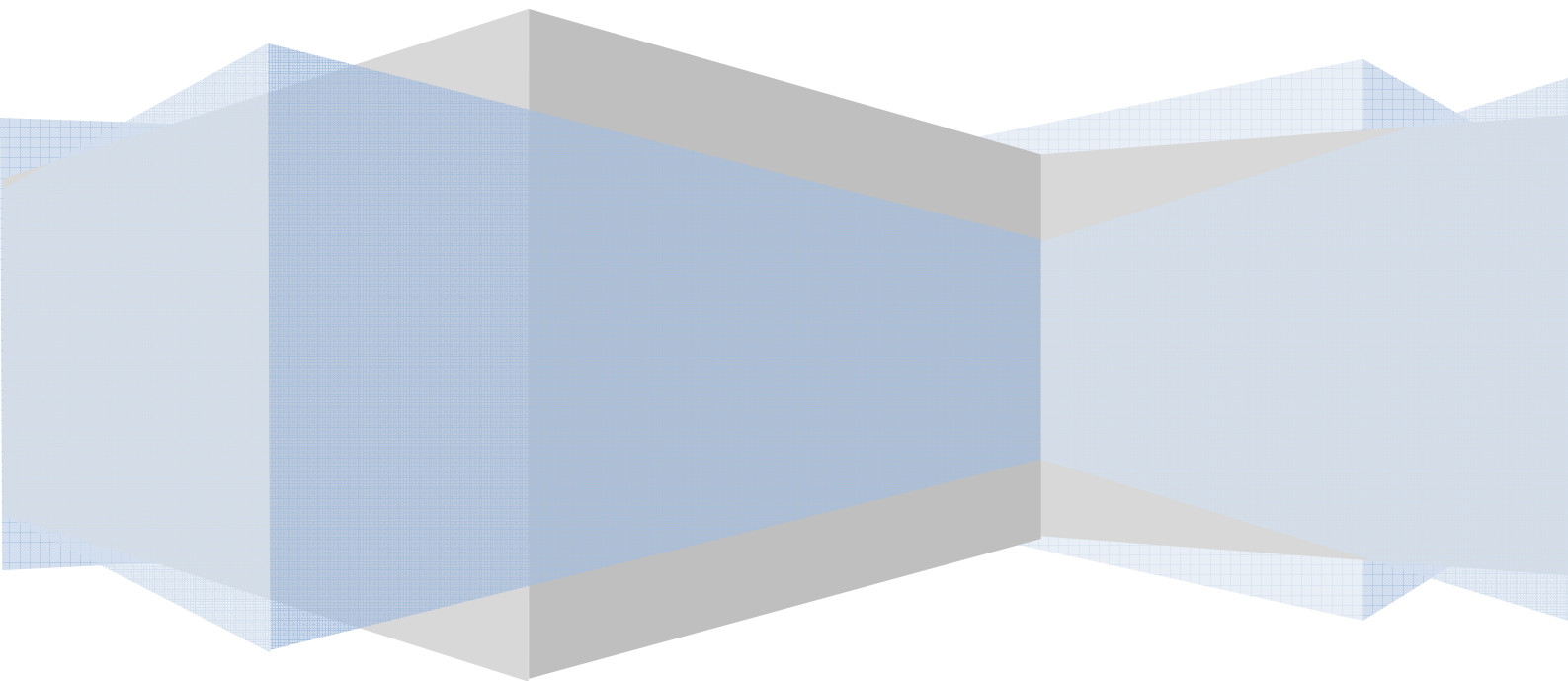


# Quality Framework



## Quality Assurance Framework

### Summary

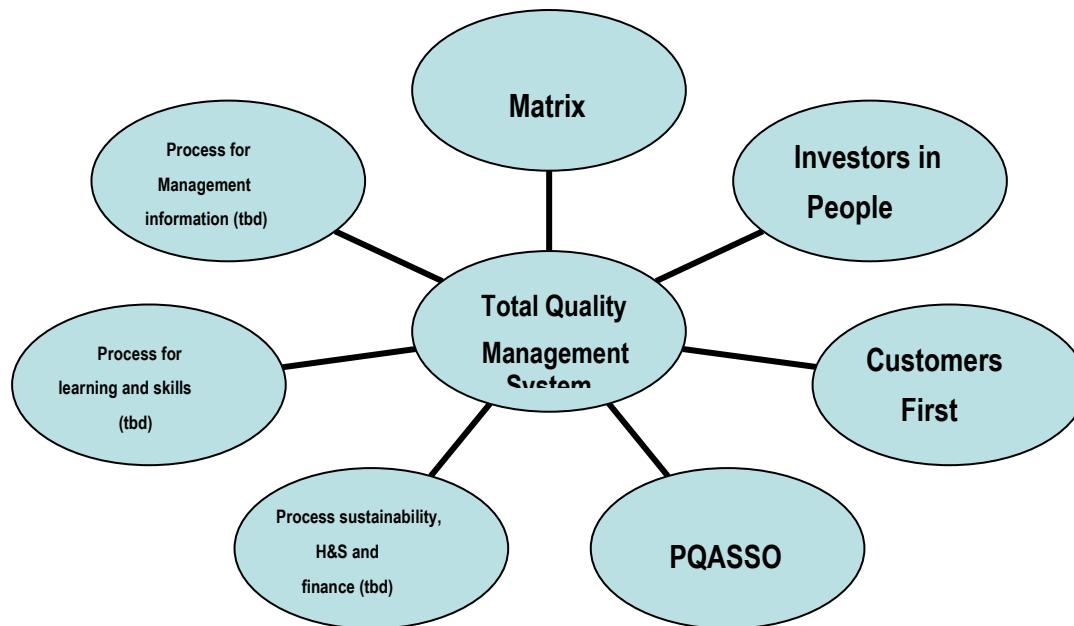
The Executive Committee have already identified that in order for Network Members to succeed in the commissioning and procurement process they must be able to:

- Satisfy potential funding organisations that they have the capacity, competence and quality of provision to deliver the services; and
- That they can provide evidence of the impact of their project on learners.

Funding providers want assurances that processes and procedures are in place which enable the organisation to demonstrate that it conforms to recognised standards and that these are consistently applied. More specifically they want organisations to demonstrate that they have embedded management systems that support transparent governance and leadership, invest in staff, listen to service users and use information to inform service developments, work efficiently, plan effectively and monitors and evaluates impact. This format has been laid out as criteria within the National Common Inspection Framework (CIF). Without exception now, the major funding providers are using CIF as part of their evaluation criteria for tender awards and to monitor contract delivery.

One of the key tasks identified for the Build2Impact project was to undertake research to enable the Executive Committee to determine what information, advice and guidance should be provided to Network Members in order that they can satisfy the requirements of the Funding Agencies.

Research has identified that there is no one approach which will fully satisfy the requirements of Common Assessment Framework and Funding Agencies. Research has however shown that the most effective way of providing the evidence to funding agencies is to have an **externally assessed total quality management system in place**, which provides an independent assessment of the organisations. Developing this total quality management system will be necessitate using several different quality assurance systems and will also involve the Build2Impact project developing some specific process to support members.



The first step in this journey will be to adopt the Matrix, PQASSO, Investors in People and Customer First quality management systems. Mapped against the Common Inspection Framework these 4 systems provide over 75% of what is required.

There are other quality processes which can be adopted to cover the 25% shortfall but most of these are quite complicated and expensive. The Build2Impact Team needs to explore further this area and in particular the learning and skills area.

The implementation of a total quality management system will enable the Network to develop its own in-house total quality management support structure (Super Coaches) reducing the necessity to secure the services of external consultants as each of the accreditation bodies have structures in place to develop advisors and assessors. Advisors and Assessors can also work towards the Learning and Skills Improvement Services Certificate in Leading Quality Improvements (ILM level 5 or 7).

It is not necessary for the Network to be the prime provider of all these activities as organisations such as COEMO have secured funding to support organisations to develop leadership and governance and will be using the PQASSO structure to undertake this role. It will therefore be necessary to establish partnership arrangements which will enable the Network to signpost members to other agencies.

## Recommendations

It is recommended that the Network Executive agree that the Build2Impact Project Team

- develop a total quality management system which can be used by participating members to achieve the accreditations as quickly and as painlessly as possible
- adopt Matrix, PQASSO, Investors in People and Customer First as the first stages in the Networks quality process
- establish partnership arrangements to ensure members receive focused advice and information to assist them to implement the quality systems

- develop a structure for the development of in-house Advisors and Assessors drawn from Network Members and support them to achieve the Certificate in Leading Quality Improvements (ILM level 5 or 7)
- develop and provide tools and materials which will support the achievement of the total quality management system

# Towards Total Quality Management for the BME Learning Network

## Introduction

It is clear that quality has moved centre stage and has become a major focus for funders, providers and for 'customers' – the learners. Raising the quality of provision and the standards achieved is therefore fundamental to the whole learning and skills agenda and without demonstrating quality BME Network Members will struggle to be commissioned to undertake work directly or as a sub contractor.

It is important to understand where this quality drive is coming from, how this is affecting the expectations of Funding Agencies, the implications for the BME Learning Network and the practical actions which can be taken to address the issues.

## Key Driver

The key drive of quality is introduction of the Common Inspection Framework (CIF), commissioning and the need for change in the delivery of outputs and outcomes for learners. The Framework and its associated process are focused on 'proving and improving' and encouraging potential and future providers to make quality and continuous improvement part of how they work each day. Organisations need to show funders a solid approach that reflects how they run their organisation and the quality of outcomes for the learner.

## What is the Common Inspection Framework (CIF)

The Common Inspection Framework looks at the quality of education and training, standards achieved by those receiving education and training and whether financial resources made available to those providing education and training are managed effectively and used in a way which provides value for money.

The framework is based on three principles:

- The achievements of learners
- The quality of the education and training provided
- The effectiveness and efficiency of leadership and management.

The framework centres on seven **key questions**

1. How well do learners achieve?
2. How effective are the teaching, training and assessment?
3. How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interest of learners and the wider community?
4. How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?
5. How effective are leadership and strategic management?
6. How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?
7. How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?

Services are grades on a five-point scale:

- Grade 1: good with outstanding features
- Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings
- Grade 3: good features outweigh shortcomings

Grade 4: some good features, but shortcomings in important areas  
 Grade 5: many important shortcomings.

The first stage in the Common Inspection Process requires organisations to undertake an annual Self Assessment Review and produce a Quality Improvement Plan.

### Self Assessment Review and Quality Improvement Plans

In order to answer these questions and to demonstrate the organisations competency and capacity, it is recommended as part of the CIF, that the organisation undertake an annual self assessment review (SAR's) to determine current status and develop a quality improvement plan (QIP's) to tackle any areas where improvement is required.

A number of funding organisations are now asking for proof of the SAR & QIP process as part of their tender/commissioning process or as part of their monitoring of currently funded organisations. For example,

- The DWP state that providers will be asked each year for a copy of their self-assessment review, supported by a quality improvement plan.
- The LSC has introduced a new framework for quality and success which focuses on ensuring that individual providers are able to meet the demands of learners, employers and local communities for learning and skills, through the provision of high quality learning and training programmes that maximise learners' success. New providers will be asked for evidence against the CIF criteria and if awarded a contract will need to undertake an annual self-assessment review.

### The Common Inspection Framework and LSC requirements

Common Inspection Framework	Key LSC/ES aspects of quality
<i>Achievement and standards</i>	
How well do learners achieve?	Accurate data on how retention, achievement, progression are addressed
<i>Quality of education and training</i>	
How effective are teaching training and learning? How are achievement and learning affected by resources? How effective are the assessment and monitoring of learning? How well do the programmes and courses meet the needs and interests of learners? How well are learners guided and supported?	Up-to-date staff development plan, health and safety plans, and systems
<i>Leadership and management</i>	
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statements of learning entitlement</li> <li>• Take account of LSC strategy and targets</li> <li>• Implement national and local priorities</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure systematic review of improvement processes</li> <li>• Maintain good working relationships with LSC/ES and key partners and customers</li> <li>• Have good systems for feedback</li> <li>• Promote equal opportunities and close equality gaps</li> </ul>
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- The Jobcentre Plus quality process requires each provider to have an annual self-assessment report. This in turn needs to feed into an action plan. Jobcentre Plus will assess the rigour and effectiveness of the provider's self-assessment process and action plan.
- In a recent WY Local Authority Children's Service Commissioning document evidence of the organisations SAR and QIP was requested.

Where organisations are party to delivering a funded project the lead organisation/accountable body is now being requested to ensure and prove that their partners have carried out the SAR process and produced a QIP.

### **Providing Evidence to Funding Agencies and Accountable Bodies**

For public sector learning and skills providers, such as colleges, universities and schools there is an established external inspection process assessing their provision against the Common Inspection Framework. There is however, no process in place for third sector learning and skills providers which enables them to provide the holistic externally assessed evidence.

Ensuring consistency of quality throughout an organisation to satisfy the requirements of funding agencies for third sector organisations is not an easy task and is not cheap. Without a recognised national framework and inspection process to use, third sector organisations have difficulty providing the evidence required in a holistic manner and without significant organisational investment. Demonstrating quality can be resource intensive and costly which deters many from starting on this journey and therefore affects their ability to secure funding.

There are a number of strategies for addressing the quality agenda in a holistic rather than a piecemeal way (though in some cases 'incremental' changes might be more successfully). The most common way involves using external assessed quality assurance standards. Many of the standards in the market are widely recognised by funding organisations and do hold significant weight when they are making judgements about an organisation.

There are however a significant number of externally assessed quality assurance standards, a large number of which are unsuitable for the learning and skills sector. Determining which external quality frameworks to use and working through the process can be very challenging for many small/medium size organisations. It is therefore extremely important that they identify and then work through the most appropriate systems obtaining accreditation as efficiently and quickly as possible.

Some research has been undertaken to identify externally assessed quality assurance standards suitable for Network Members and therefore will satisfy the requirements of funding agencies. Each of the identified quality systems have then been examined in detail and then mapped against the CIF criteria. The findings are shown below:

### Characteristics of quality schemes

Scheme	Focus	Characteristics
<p><b>Investors in People</b></p> <p>Process involves external accreditation by submission of application to IIP UK which leads to an independent assessment</p>	<p>People, employees in an organisation and their role in improving its performance</p>	<p>Based on principles of commitment, planning, and evaluation. Involves various stages, from information gathering, independent initial assessment and developing people.</p>
<p><b>Customer First</b></p> <p>Process involves external accreditation by submission of application to Customer First UK which leads to an independent assessment</p>	<p>Customers service users</p>	<p>Based on 32 statements covering 3 key areas, customer relationships, market awareness and people</p>
<p><b>Matrix Service standards</b></p> <p>Process involves external accreditation by submission of application to Guidance Accreditation Board which leads to an independent assessment.</p>	<p>Information, advice and guidance</p>	<p>Comprises five areas of service delivery and five areas from people's awareness of the service to continuous improvement through monitoring and action.</p>
<p><b>PQASSO</b></p> <p>Process involves external accreditation by submission of application to the Charities Evaluation Service which leads to an independent assessment.</p>	<p>Whole organisation system for VCOs and small businesses</p>	<p>12 'areas' : planning for quality; governance; management; user-centred service; staffing and volunteers; training and small development ; managing money; managing resources; managing activities; networking and partnership; monitoring and evaluation; results.</p>

### Quality Assurance and the Common Inspection Framework

Common Inspection Framework Criteria	Matrix	Investors in People	Customer First	PQASSO
1. How well do learners achieve?				X
2. How effective are the teaching, training and assessment?		X	X	X

3. How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interest of learners and the wider community?			X	X
4. How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	X		X	X
5. How effective are leadership and strategic management?		X		X
6. How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	X	X	X	
7. How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?		X		X

As stated earlier there is no one single process which will meet all the criteria of the Common Inspection Framework and all fall short when trying to demonstrate how well learners achieve, management information, financial management and sustainability. However, achieving all of the accreditations shown above will provide an excellent portfolio of evidence for funding agencies as a starting point on a journey to total quality management.

### **Making quality assurance easy?**

Whilst the research reported here cannot give quantitative evidence, it is clear that the third sector is starting to use quality frameworks, either internal or external. COEMO for example, has already received funding to support organisations to work towards PQASSO accreditation. It is clear that the need to demonstrate quality as part of the commissioning arrangements and to show how service delivery will be managed and monitored is driving this move towards accreditation and will underpin the approach taken by potential funding organisations. BME Network Members are starting to understand this fact and a number are 'looking into' different quality approaches and accreditation processes.

It is vital then that the BME Learning Network provides the relevant advice and support to enable Members to successfully develop and maintain the quality assured process. This must however be cost effective, realistic, responsive and achievable and above all painless.

The mapping exercise has enabled a more detailed understanding of the requirements of each of the standards to be achieved and has identified some key similarities, issues, as well as the gaps.

### **Similarities**

All the standards ask questions about

- Leadership and governance
- People within the organisation
- Customer interface
- Quality of delivery

- Monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement

## **Issues**

Across all the standards there is recognition that organisations have difficulties implementing quality assurance systems. These included:

- lack of administration capacity
- funding the cost of accreditation
- lack of systems for recording learner attendance or progression
- lack of sufficient trainers of the right quality

## **Opportunities**

There are a number of suggested approaches to these issues, apart from the call for more funding. The similarities create an opportunity to work with organisations to develop one portfolio of main evidence which can then be supplemented with specific information to satisfy specific criteria within a standard. Developing one portfolio and collecting and developing evidence at the same time against all standards will speed up the process and make it much more cost effective and manageable for the organisations. Further it will also enable a total quality advice, guidance and support service to be provided and therefore lending itself to the development of 'Total Quality Management Coaches'.

The other opportunity is for the network to collaborate to develop quality assurance systems which are shared, with one partner taking the lead role, and providing the system for smaller organisations to buy in to. In this way smaller providers would not be lost simply because they did not have the capacity to develop their own quality system.

Additionally, there is an opportunity for the network to develop some common approaches to the gaps which are not fully covered by the standards and to recommend these to network members, in particular common management information systems, financial management arrangements and learning and skills protocols.

## **Developing a Management Information System**

The quality assurance approach recommended will also need to be supported by quality assured management information processes which

- supports members to establish baselines which supports the development of targets, milestones and outcomes to secure funding
- recognises and records the progress and achievement of learners
- supports Network members to develop processes to measure project impact

It is outside the scope of this report and will require further research to put together a proposal to the Executive Committee with a recommended approach.

## **Financial Management**

A significant issue for any funding agency will be to obtain assurances that the organisation has financial arrangements in place which show effective financial management. If the aspirations of the Network are to be realised this will become a significant issue for Network Members. It is proposed to undertake some further research to inform recommendations to the Executive around financial systems to recommend to members.

## **Learning and Skills**

Recognising and reporting the progress and achievement of learners can take many different forms. Additionally monitoring and evaluating the delivery of the learning and skills is a mind field. To arrive at a quality assured process for this area some further research is still required.

## **Conclusion**

The BME Network is a unique organisation and the approach to quality will create a unique position for the BME Network and its members with providers in the region. Developing a total quality management system with trained advisors and assessors will be a unique selling point and could generate national recognition. As an organisation and through its members being able to claim a particular level of service from BME learning and skills providers and to gain national recognition will establish added value for the Network and its members increase its appeal to Funding Agencies and 'stakeholders', and put the Network and its members in a position of being a provider of first choice.

## Quality Standard Characteristics

Criteria	Matrix	Investors in People	PQASSO	Customer First
Leadership	People's use of the service is defined and understood	<p>A strategy for improving the performance of the organisation is clearly defined and understood</p> <p>Strategies for managing people are designed to promote equality of opportunity in the development of the organisation's people.</p> <p>The capabilities managers need to lead, manage and develop people effectively are clearly defined and understood</p> <p>Managers are effective in leading, managing and developing people.</p>	Governance, Management, Managing money, Managing resources	How do you identify and then meet your customers' needs?
Plan	Service delivery is planned and maintained	Learning and development is planned to achieve the organisation' objectives.	Planning for quality	<p>What is your approach to understanding the market?</p> <p>How is the target market identified?</p>
Users	People are made aware of the service and how to engage with it	People are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility by being involved in decision-making.	User-centred service	How do you follow up your customers?

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Matrix</b>	<b>Investors in People</b>	<b>PQASSO</b>	<b>Customer First</b>
Staff	Staff competence and support they are given are sufficient to deliver the service	People's contributions to the organisation are recognised and valued.	Staff and volunteers, Training and development	How do your people understand and assess customers' requirements? Are your recruitment methods ensuring you have the best person for each position? How do you ensure that your people are continually developing their skills so they can provide the best service to your customers?
Delivery	People are provided with access to information and support in using it	People learn and develop effectively.	Managing activities	What practices are in place to deal effectively with customer complaints and queries?
Partners			Networking and partnership	
Review	Continuous quality improvement is ensured through monitoring, evaluation and action  Feedback on the quality of the service is obtained	Improvements are continually made to the way people are managed and developed.	Monitoring and evaluation	How are your services improved and new ones developed to better meet your customers' needs?
Impact	People are supported in exploring options and making choices	Investment in people improves the performance of the organisation.	Results.	

