

CITB NI Focus Group

Background

1. Why the Focus Group has been set up?
 - 1.1 Review of the CITB NI funding support system.
 - 1.2 Advise employers of proposed levy legislation changes.
 - 1.3 To allow employers from a range of sectors and size to have their say.
 - 1.4 Ensure proposed changes are informed by feedback from our employers.

Purpose of Focus Group

2. The purpose of the Focus Group
 - 2.1 To ensure Levy funding is invested in training that will have an impact in the Construction Industry in NI and improve Business Performance
 - 2.2 To assist CITB NI in ensuring that the allocation of funding support meets industry needs now and in the future.
 - 2.3 We want to listen our customers and seek a range of views
 - 2.4 A forum for keeping our employers up to date on impending changes

Outcomes of Meeting 1 held on 4 May 2016

3. The Proposed Legislation Changes that have been submitted to the Department
 - 3.1 Include work outside NI the rational for this change is due to the nature of the work in NI. CITB NI wants to support the training of all NI employers regardless of where they are working. To simplify the process for employers working in both NI and GB.
 - 3.2 Lower threshold from £80,000 to £40,000 by reducing the threshold this would ensure that the levy system is fair and equitable. 24% of employers are currently contributing to the levy pool but all registered employers can avail of services. NI threshold same as GB however the salary levels not comparable. To spread the costs and benefits across the whole industry.
4. The Group was supportive of the proposed changes in Legislation noting that this would be a fair and equitable system which may give an opportunity for CITB NI to provide a greater return to support training.

Outcomes of Meeting 2 held on 25 May 2016

5. The reasons for the need to amend the grant scheme due to commence on 1 September 2016 are noted as follows;
 - 5.1 Grants budget has been exceeded the last number of years
 - 5.2 CITB NI need to main financial stability
 - 5.3 CITB NI need to control expenditure
 - 5.4 CITB NI need to review and further develop the grants scheme

6. Grant payments made to levy payers and non levy payers for the training year 1 September 2015 to date are noted below;
 - 6.1 non levy payers 105 employers claimed grants totalling a grants value of £60k
 - 6.2 levy payers 348 employers claimed grants totalling a grants value of £789k
7. It was noted that the following changes had been previously approved by the Board as a control measure for the training year to commence 1 September 2016;
 - 7.1 Daily grant rate reduced from £60 to £50 per person per day. This is also reflective of the CITB GB daily grant rate.
 - 7.2 Grants to levy payers to be capped to the amount of levy paid, excluding apprenticeships and eligibility for Tier 2 and Tier 3 support.
 - 7.3 Grants to non levy payers to be capped to £500, excluding apprenticeships and remaining eligible for Tier 2 and Tier 3 support.
 - 7.4 The group was supportive of the reduction in the daily rate as it was felt that a small amount would not make a significant difference.
 - 7.5 The group requested that consideration be given to a bespoke training grant i.e. a number of employers have carried out leadership/development programmes which have no formal qualifications as the outcome however employers heavily invest in the delivery of the programme.
 - 7.6 Work outside Northern Ireland has been written into the terms and conditions of grant due to the work position in NI and the impact on the uptake for grant.
 - 7.7 The 2016/17 stationery for the new training year is currently being drafted and all of the proposals will be included.

8. Group Discussion/Agreement

- 8.1 Legislation driven training courses was discussed and it was the consensus of the group that not offering grant aid, for example, first aid courses this would have a significant impact on smaller employers and the Group confirmed that they would not support the removal of grant support for these areas but would consider alternatives. It was however suggested to offer a lower value grant aid and considering reducing to 50% rather than 75%.
- 8.2 Cap grants for levy payers the group confirmed that this would not make a difference as they are planning for the next three years and to bring training to the next level for supervisors and senior manager level. It was advised that the training is not carried out for the purposes of grant aid.
- 8.3 Cap grant to non levy payers the group confirmed that this was reasonable to cap grants.
- 8.4 It was emphasised that the capping of grants will not include the other services offered under Tier 2 , Tier 3 and excludes apprenticeship grants

9. Next Steps

- 9.1 Employer questionnaire to be returned by 13 June 2016
- 9.2 Questionnaires to be analysed
- 9.3 Series of meetings to be set up to discuss feedback and development of preliminary ideas for future grant schemes.