

FINAL EVALUATION

of the

Prosper through People project

Led by Tourism South East

Co-financed by the Learning & Skills Council,
Hampshire & Isle of Wight
and the European Social Fund

July 2008

Prepared for

**TOURISM
SOUTH EAST**

by



Wessex Partnerships Limited

Regional Business Centre
Harts Farm Way
Havant, Hampshire
PO9 1HR
Tel: 023 9244 9449
Fax: 023 9244 9535

E-mail: info@wessexpartnerships.com
Website: www.wessexpartnerships.com

CONTENTS

	Page
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
2. INTRODUCTION	4
2.1 Evaluation methodology	4
2.2 Target audience for the report	5
2.3 Rationale for the project	5
2.4 Project aim, objectives and scope	6
2.5 Interim evaluation findings	7
3. PROJECT OUTCOMES	9
3.1 Key success factors	9
3.2 Financial performance	9
3.3 Activity levels and outcomes	9
3.4 Project management and administration	19
3.5 ESF cross-cutting themes	22
4. SUMMARY	27
4.1 Project successes	27
4.2 Challenges	27
4.3 Lessons learned	28
4.4 Conclusions	28
5. RECOMMENDATIONS	30
6. APPENDICES	31

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This summative evaluation has been commissioned by Tourism South East (TSE) to assess the final outcomes, effectiveness and impact of the *Prosper through People* project. *Prosper through People* is a Hampshire-wide project, co-financed by the Learning & Skills Council, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (LSC) and the European Social Fund (ESF). It is concerned with up-skilling the workforce in the Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure industry. The original delivery period was intended to be July 2006-December 2007: this was extended with availability of further funding to the end of June 2008.

1.2 The project's specific objectives were:

- To organise 10 employer awareness raising events promoting the business benefits of investment in skill development
- To undertake a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) of 136 companies and develop a training plan as a result
- Provide opportunities for 340 individuals from those companies to develop their skills through a mix of short modular training convenient to employer premises, peer-to-peer group learning and the use of pilot 'Learning Burst' online learning tools
- Establish employer networks through the provision of 21 peer-to-peer networking sessions across the county
- Support 15 companies in achieving a good employer code of practice through the quality standard 'Partners in Success'
- Encourage employers to adopt a learning culture
- Evaluate and disseminate the impact of the project on business productivity and competitiveness

1.3 The project met or exceeded all of its individual targets:

	Target	Actual
Beneficiaries recruited on to the project	340	343
Training Needs Analyses undertaken	136	144
Awareness -raising events held	10	10
Peer-to-peer networking sessions for SMEs	21	21
Learners progressing on to further learning	21	35

1.4 Learning workshops held as a result of TNAs undertaken, and follow-up training plans produced, were wide-ranging and covered generic topics such as Customer Service, Marketing, IT, Management and Complaints Handling as well as more specialist events to meet the needs of participating businesses, such as Understanding Wines. Feedback from attendees indicates that the vast majority felt that the workshops were delivered well or very well.

1.5 Twenty one Peer-to-peer networking sessions were held, achieving the adjusted target set. Specialist speakers were invited to each session, with the subject focus tailored to meet the needs of attendees. Subjects included Marketing, Quality, Collaboration and Partnership, Equal Opportunities, Health & Safety, Green/ Environmental issues. Feedback from these sessions was positive, indicating that they had been of real value.

1.6 The peer-to-peer networking sessions facilitated the development of a Small Accommodation Providers' Forum in Southampton. Due to its success and the value attributed to it by its members, the member organisations have decided to sustain it after the end of the project in order to support each other and facilitate information sharing.

1.7 Innovative approaches to learning included working with new partners such as the Fire Service and Local Authority Environmental Health Departments to update project beneficiaries on changes to regulations affecting the industry, and the trialling of a 'Learning Bursts CD ROM'. The latter consisted of three short interactive on-line learning sessions guiding the user through a series of scenarios and quizzes linked to managing the

customer experience, respecting disabilities and differences and making the most of the internet.

1.8 The impact of the project on beneficiaries was intended to be in gaining commitment from SMEs in the Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure sector to continue training beyond the life of the project. This is a challenging commitment, given the nature of the industry which tends to suffer from lack of time/money to invest in training and high levels of staff turnover, but over 90% of those questioned through a survey undertaken for this evaluation indicated that they intended to carry out more staff training in the future.

1.9 The management and administration of the project has been well executed. Data has been kept and efficiently analysed on various aspects of the project, including beneficiary breakdown, workshop provision and attendance, output and outcome monitoring. The project partnership has worked well and has included representatives from Hampshire County Council, FE colleges and Train to Gain. Steering Group members felt that meetings had been well organised and conducted, that they had been able to make a useful contribution to the management and development of the project and that the training was well delivered and had made a real difference to the Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure sector.

1.10 This has been a well run and effective project. It has provided opportunities for a large number of SMEs in the Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure sector to gain benefits from training in which they might otherwise not participate. The benefits have been demonstrated to a substantial proportion of the participating businesses through improved business performance, and there has been a wide scale recognition of the need to provide additional training within SMEs. The challenge, however, is for that training actually to be put in place, given the pressures under which such businesses often operate and the relatively high level of staff turnover that applies in this industry.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Evaluation methodology

This summative evaluation has been commissioned by Tourism South East (TSE) to assess the final outcomes, effectiveness and impact of the *Prosper through People* project. The report will encompass:

- Findings from the interim evaluation conducted by TSE in 2007
- What has been achieved overall through the project
- The effect of what has been achieved
- Conclusions and recommendations for future action

This report updates the findings of the interim evaluation undertaken by TSE in March 2007. It re-visits the original agreed project objectives and addresses the following questions:

- What was the project seeking to achieve/change?
- What is the context in which the project has been operating?
- To what extent has the project achieved its targets?
- What improvements in the target group/area can be attributed to the project's activities?
- What factors have contributed to the successes and challenges of the project?
- What lessons are there for future activity?
- Were there any unexpected outcomes?

Information for this report was gained through a combination of:

- Desk-based analysis of information provided by TSE
- An e-mail survey of beneficiaries of the training provided by the project
- An e-mail survey of Steering Group members/project partners
- Face-to-face discussion with members of the project team

The co-operation of the following in providing input to the evaluation has been particularly helpful and is gratefully acknowledged:

- Gill Heighington – Training Manager, Tourism South East
- Jess Stone – Training Projects Officer, Tourism South East

2.2 Target audience for the report

This evaluation report is designed primarily to be of interest and assistance to:

- Tourism South East – lead organisation for the project
- Learning & Skills Council, Hampshire & Isle of Wight – funder
- Members of the project partnership and other stakeholders

The findings and recommendations of the report should inform future project activity undertaken by TSE. It should also inform other bodies, such as Business Link and the Local Skills for Productivity Alliance (LSfPA), concerned with the skills and support requirements of the Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure sectors – including through *Train to Gain*.

2.3 Rationale for the project

Tourism South East had gained a good understanding of the training needs of the sectors concerned through previous skills development projects, regular research into trends in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure, and through its membership of the LSfPA.

‘Tourism ExSEllence’, the Tourism strategy for the South East at the time this project was being developed, indicated that the sector was highly fragmented, with large numbers of small operators working to their own agendas and more than 100 public agencies involved in Tourism. The strategy concluded that there were huge dividends to be gained from closer integration and the identification of a common purpose. With this in mind, TSE decided to include four employer networks in the *Prosper through People* project, with the aim of facilitating sharing information and best practice through informal networking.

TSE also understood that there was a general lack of awareness within the Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure industry of the need for training. This was particularly apparent amongst SMEs who felt that they could not afford the time for their staff to undertake training. As a result, TSE decided to include awareness raising events in the project, with the aim of promoting the benefits of investment in skills development on business profitability.

As well as a lack of awareness of the importance of staff training, a number of

other barriers were identified that limited the engagement of employers in training in the Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure industry:

- *Cost barriers* – companies frequently quoted affordability and the cost of time away from the workplace as a barrier. The project was able to alleviate this by offering Training Needs Analysis (TNA), one-to-one advice and learning provision at subsidised rates and local to employers' premises.
- *Organisational barriers* – small firms in particular are poor at committing to staff development. By demonstrating the value of training and undertaking company TNAs, the project offered the prospect of increasing the commitment to training and employers approaching future training in a more structured way.
- *Geographical barriers* – as a consequence of the rural nature of parts of Hampshire, there is a paucity of service provision in more remote areas. The project was designed to provide training and resources through localised delivery of training courses and networking events, undertaking TNAs on employer premises and the availability of online training resources.
- *Delivery barriers* – owner-managers of busy hospitality establishments frequently argue that college-based NVQ-based learning is not appropriate to their needs, and that training needs to be tailored to core occupations unique to the sector. The project was able to counter this by delivering training and networking events at times and places most convenient to employers.

2.4 Project aim, objectives and scope

Prosper through People is a Hampshire-wide project, co-financed by the Learning & Skills Council, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (LSC) and the European Social Fund (ESF) and concerned with up-skilling the workforce in the Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure industry. The original delivery period was intended to be July 2006-December 2007: this was extended with availability of further funding to the end of June 2008.

2.4.1 The project's stated aim was to:

- Promote and encourage small to medium size Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure sector businesses (e.g. restaurants, accommodation providers, travel firms, theatres, taxi companies) to take advantage of a range of training and professional development opportunities.

Those SMEs which had not traditionally been engaged in training were particularly encouraged to participate.

2.4.2 The project set out the following specific objectives:

- To organise 10 employer awareness raising events promoting the business benefits of investment in skill development
- To undertake a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) of 136 companies and develop a training plan as a result
- Provide opportunities for 340 individuals from those companies to develop their skills through a mix of short modular training on employer premises, peer-to-peer group learning and the use of pilot 'Learning Burst' online learning tools
- Establish employer networks through the provision of 21 peer-to-peer networking sessions across the county
- Support 15 companies in achieving a good employer code of practice through the quality standard 'Partners in Success'
- Encourage employers to adopt a learning culture
- Evaluate and disseminate the impact of the project on business productivity and competitiveness

2.5 Interim evaluation findings

An interim project evaluation, undertaken by TSE and covering the period July 2006 to March 2007, set out the following results after the first 9 months of operation of the project:

- Key outputs had, for the most part, been achieved and – in one case – exceeded
- An additional two awareness raising sessions had been held

- Beneficiary feedback from workshops attended had been very positive
- The majority of beneficiary organisations had received a visit from the TSE Training Manager to carry out a Training Needs Assessment (TNA)
- The majority of the peer-to-peer networking sessions had been held, and positive feedback had been received from attendees in relation to their usefulness and opportunities for networking
- The content and timing of training sessions had been customised to the needs of beneficiaries
- Initial feedback on the pilot 'Learning Burst' materials had been favourable

3. FINAL PROJECT OUTCOMES

3.1 Key success factors

The key success factors for the project can be summarised as:

- Recruiting sufficient numbers of eligible beneficiaries
- Establishing a peer group support network with the potential to be self-sustaining beyond the lifetime of the project
- Encouraging beneficiaries to attend training sessions on a range of subjects important to the Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure sector
- Gaining commitment from beneficiaries to pursue further learning opportunities within their businesses

3.2 Financial performance

The project has successfully drawn down the approved amount of funding (£126,151) to cover the costs of the activities put in place and management and administration overheads.

3.3 Activity levels and outcomes

3.3.1 Statistics

The output and outcome targets for the project as set out in the original tender document/delivery plan are summarised below, together with actual achievement. All of the targets were met or exceeded.

Table 1b: Outcomes achieved against target

Ref.	Description	2006		2007		Tgt. adjust-ment*	2008		Total	
		Tgt.	Act.	Tgt.	Act.		Tgt.	Act.	Tgt.	Act.
OP1	Beneficiaries recruited on to project	100 (55)	36	100 (145)	214	+50	90	93	340	343
OP2	TNAs undertaken	60 (35)	36	40 (65)	70	+6	30	38	136	144
OP3	Awareness raising events held	4 (3)	3	2 (3)	5	+2	2	2	10	10
OP4	Peer-to-peer networking sessions for SMEs	7	4	8	12	+1	5	5	21	21

* For over-achievement in 2006-07

Table 1b: Outcomes achieved against target

Ref.	Description	2006		2007		Tgt.	2008		Total	
		Tgt.	Act.	Tgt.	Act.	Adjust*	Tgt.	Act.	Tgt.	Act.
OC1	Beneficiaries completing training plans	60 (35)	36	40 (65)	70	+6	30	38	136	144
OC2	Interim & final evaluation reports	1	0	1	1		0	1	2	2
OC3	Staff through Partners in Success	6	5	9	10		0	0	15	15
OC4	Learners progressing to further learning	6	0	9	16	+1	5	19	21	35
OC5	Dissemination activities	1	1	3	3		0	0	4	4

* For over-achievement in 2006-07

Note: Outputs/outcomes with different target numbers in brackets indicates where the breakdown of targets between 2006 and 2007 was adjusted to reflect the fact that project activity commenced later than planned

3.3.2 Beneficiary recruitment

Success in recruiting the budgeted number of eligible beneficiaries on to the project is demonstrated in Table 1a above (OP1): 343 were actually recruited against a total target of 340. Within this overall figure, there was varying success between 2006 and 2007. Reasons for the lower than target recruitment during 2006 were: the later than anticipated start of the project; seasonal fluctuations in business activity and, therefore, availability; time required to raise awareness of the project and the potential benefits of the training amongst employers.

In order to engage businesses and their employees with the project, 10 employer awareness sessions were held (achieving target). Three of these were held in 2006, five during the early part of 2007 and two in 2008. The lower number of events held during 2006 may have contributed to the slower than expected recruitment of beneficiaries on to the project in the first year.

These beneficiaries were accessed through 185 businesses, against a target of 130. Within this overall figure, the project recruited:

- 124 micro businesses
- 52 small businesses
- 9 medium sized businesses

3.3.3 TNA production and follow-up

A key objective of the project was to analyse the training needs of all the businesses participating in the project (Table 1a – OP2). Training Needs Analyses (TNAs) were mainly undertaken by Gill Heighington, TSE Training Manager, once the organisation was enrolled on to the project. As Table 1 makes clear, the project exceeded its target of 136, preparing a total of 144 TNAs with businesses over the course of the project period. Acceptance of the recommendations made in the TNAs was gained and, as a result, follow-up reports (“Training Plans”) were produced for 100% of businesses targeted.

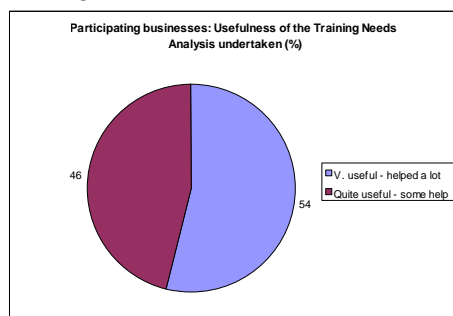
The TNAs proved to be very worthwhile to the participating organisations. Those businesses that were selected to take part in a qualitative telephone interview as part of the interim evaluation all indicated that the TNA had been of great use to the business as illustrated by the sample comments below:

“It’s very interesting to find out what’s available. As a small business it is often hard to find out what is on offer”

“The visit allowed us to see the benefits that can be brought to both our business and the customer”

This was supported by the findings of a business survey undertaken by WPL. As Figure 1 demonstrates, of those employers participating in the survey who had received a TNA (13 of 17 respondents), all felt the TNA was very useful (41%) or quite useful (35%), with no businesses finding the TNA either of little use or no use at all.

Figure 1: Usefulness of TNAs



3.3.4 Learning workshop programme

An extensive programme of learning workshops, designed to meet the needs of the target audience, was delivered as indicated in Table 2:

Table 2: Learning Workshops

Workshop sessions	No. of sessions held	Total no. of participants
Welcome to Excellence Courses	24	250
Welcome Host, Welcome Host Plus & Welcome International		
Marketing your Restaurant	7	43
Quality Housekeeping	3	37
Smarter Marketing	1	9
Lead, Motivate & Succeed	9	31
Telepower	1	2
IT	2	11
Dealing with Difficult People	5	41
Effective Upselling	1	5
Understanding Wines	1	1
Hampshire Breakfast	1	6
Complaints Handling	1	9
Smarter Online Marketing	1	4
Social Media	1	7
Delivering Successful events	1	1
Total	59	457

3.3.4.1 As the figures show, *Welcome Host* (the recognised standard for customer service in the Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure industry) was by far the most popular workshop. The wide range of other courses held, often for relatively small numbers, reflects the way the project was able to respond to demands for a particular type of training for individual businesses.

3.3.4.2 Feedback received from workshop attendees indicates a high level of satisfaction with workshop content and delivery.

“It is good to talk to others in the industry and get ideas from what they do”

“An interesting workshop – very relevant – many things to take away and apply to my organisation”

“Very helpful, inspiring and enjoyable”

“I enjoyed it and it was great meeting others who do housekeeping as a job”

“A good and informative course, excellent intro and overview to improving customer care/service”

“Very interesting, lots to take away and think about”

3.3.4.3 A survey of participating businesses undertaken by WPL also provided positive feedback on the training delivered. Figure 2 below shows that 94% of survey respondents felt the training was organised and delivered either very well (53%) or well (41%).

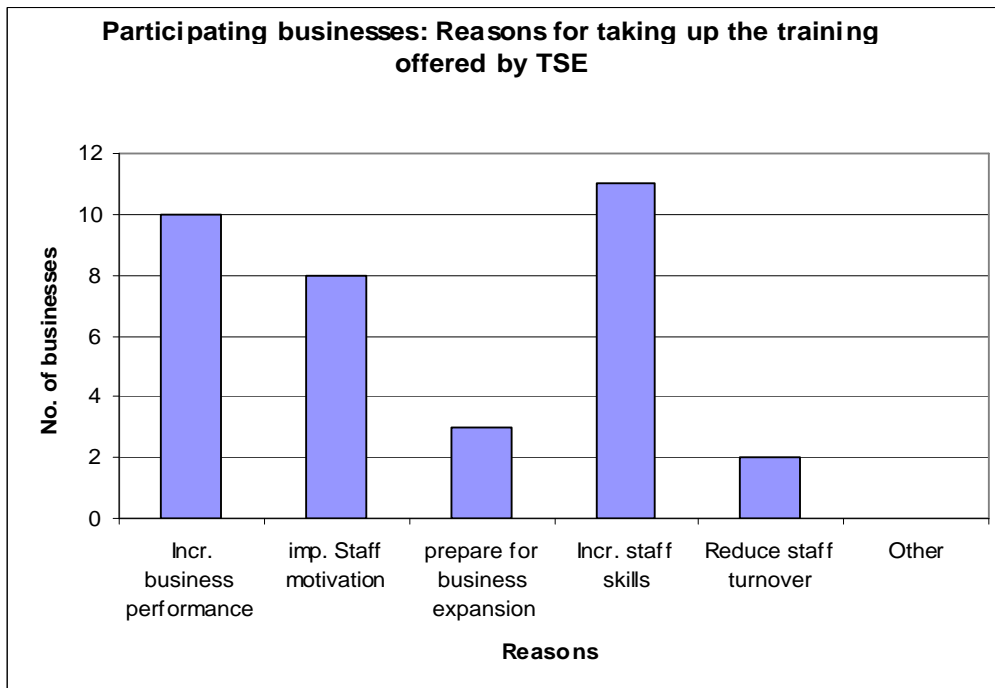
Figure 2: response to training delivery



3.3.4.4 The WPL business survey also attempted to find out the reasons businesses decided to take up training through the project. Many respondents indicated more than one reason for taking up the training offer.

3.3.4.5 As Figure 3 below indicates, improving staff skills, business performance and staff motivation levels were the key reasons. The number of businesses which decided to take up the training to improve business performance is encouraging, perhaps indicating that more businesses now accept that increasing skills levels can have a positive impact on business performance – a key aim of the awareness raising events.

Figure 3: Reasons for taking up training



3.3.5 Peer-to-Peer networking

3.3.5.1 As Table 1a demonstrated, 21 peer-to-peer networking sessions were held, meeting the target set. Speakers were invited to each session, with the subject focus tailored as far as possible to the needs of attendees. Subjects included:

- Marketing
- Quality
- Collaboration and partnership in winning public sector contracts
- Equal Opportunities
- Health & Safety policy and management
- Environmental Health
- Green Awareness

3.3.5.2 Feedback from these sessions was generally very positive. For those beneficiaries who completed feedback forms, over 90% thought the content of the sessions was either very good or good, and approximately 90% thought the programme had proved to be of value to them (very good or good value). Additional comment was made about the opportunity to network with other businesses in the same or similar industries.

3.3.5.3 The peer-to-peer networking sessions facilitated the development of a Small Accommodation Provider's Forum in Southampton. Due to its success and the value attributed to it by its members, the member organisations have decided to sustain it after the end of the project in order to support each other and facilitate information sharing (see the case study provided as Appendix 3 of this report).

3.3.5.4 Two other networks are likely to continue on a more informal basis; the Winchester Tourism Network and Havant Tourism Business Forum. These formal and informal networks will promote better information sharing between participating businesses, which should encourage more effective integration within the Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure sector across Hampshire.

3.3.6 Innovative approaches to learning

3.3.6.1 *Prosper through People* provided the opportunity to explore and experiment with more innovative approaches to training. The project developed and piloted a range of innovative workshops in response to the specific training needs of the sector. These included:

- E-marketing
- Smarter online learning
- Guide to Social Media
- Use of local food – a 'Big Hampshire Breakfast' networking session was held
- Quality workshops for the guest accommodation sector – 'Making Quality Count'

- Sustainable Tourism and Green Awareness workshops

3.3.6.2 To provide these innovative workshops and courses, TSE worked with new partners (such as the Fire Service and Local Authority Environmental Health Departments) to update project beneficiaries on changes to regulations affecting the industry. These included developments in fire safety, marketing and environmental health, involving the use of guest speakers on certain sessions.

3.3.6.3 Another innovative approach to learning implemented in the early part of the project was the 'Learning Bursts' CD ROM. This consisted of three short interactive on-line learning sessions guiding the user through a series of scenarios and quizzes linked to managing the customer experience, respecting disabilities and differences and making the most of the internet. To gauge the usefulness of the CD ROM, a questionnaire was sent by email to the 13 businesses who had requested a copy. Responses indicated that among those who had used it, it was found to be helpful to the individual and the business, and proved easy to use. In one case, the use of the CD encouraged individuals to look further into their learning needs for the future.

3.3.6.4 Despite positive feedback from these businesses, there was no further take up of the 'Learning Burst' CD ROM. The project team found that, although the online learning tool was attractive to participating businesses, it was difficult to get them to run learning sessions in the workplace – often due to time constraints.

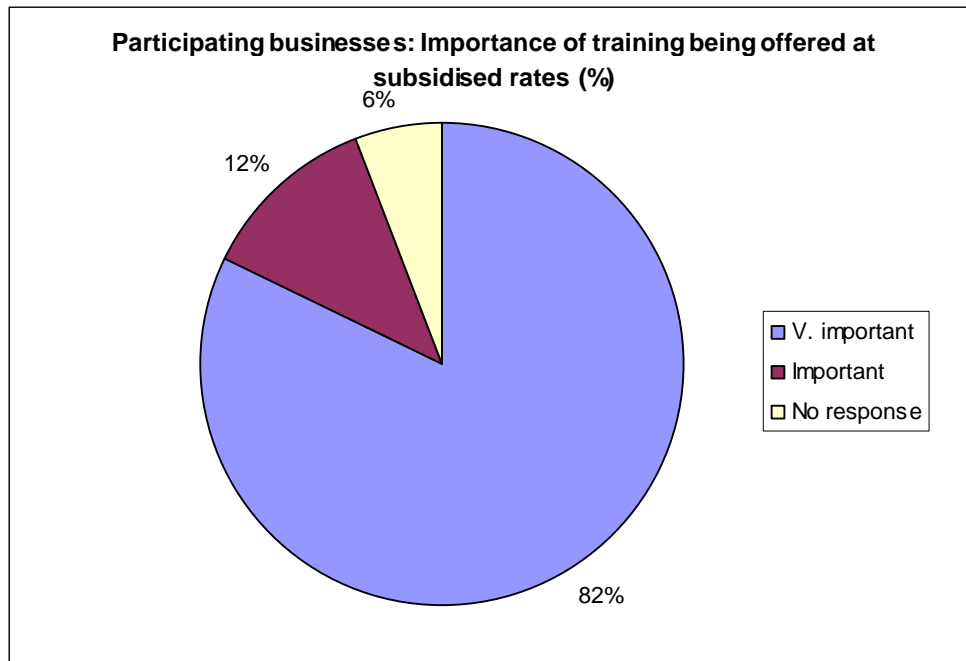
3.3.7 Impact of the project on beneficiaries

3.3.7.1 One of the project's targeted outcomes was a commitment to continue training beyond its lifespan. This is a challenging commitment, given the nature of the Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure industry which tends to suffer from lack of time/money to invest in training and high levels of staff turnover.

3.3.7.2 The business survey undertaken by WPL explored this issue. Figure 4 below demonstrates that 100% of the businesses that responded to this question felt that the training being offered at subsidised rates was

either very important or important. None of 17 respondents indicated that they would have participated regardless of cost, despite having found the TNAs and workshops useful (see sections 3.3.3 and 3.3.4). This suggests that they would be unlikely to take-up full-cost training beyond what might be statutorily required within the industry (e.g. training related to health and safety, food handling/hygiene).

Figure 4: Importance of training being subsidised



3.3.7.3 However, on comparing the business survey results with the amount of staff training undertaken in the 12 months prior to engaging with the project (Figure 5 below) and the amount of training likely to be undertaken in the future (Table 3), the results are more encouraging.

3.3.7.4 Figure 5 demonstrates that 41% of those surveyed had undertaken no staff training during the 12 months before joining *Prosper through People*, with the remaining 59% having undertaken some. None of the 17 respondents indicated that they undertook ‘quite a lot’ of training or ‘regular staff training’. Table 3 indicates that, having participated in the project, employers are more likely to undertake staff training in future – perhaps because they have seen or are beginning to see the value of up-skilling their employees. Figure 6 shows this, with 88% of respondents indicating that involvement in the project

had resulted in an improvement in business performance – albeit marginal for 24% of them.

Figure 5: Staff training undertaken during the 12 months prior to engaging with the project

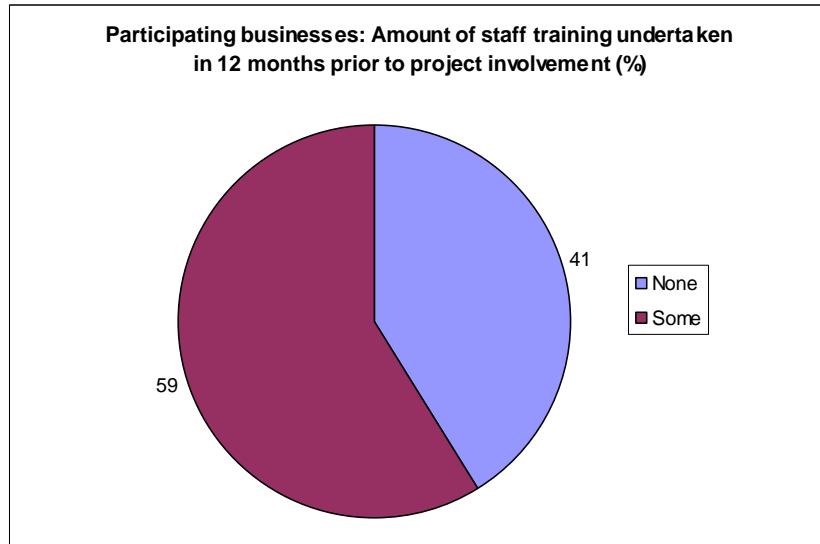
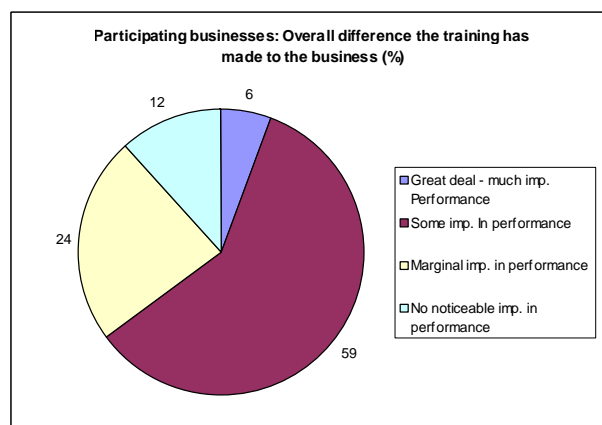


Table 3: Amount of staff training likely to be undertaken in the future

Amount of staff training likely to be undertaken in the future	No. of businesses
Lots more - I'm really fired up!	1
As much as I can reasonably manage	13
A little when I can	3
Unlikely to organise further training soon	0
Total	17

Figure 6: Overall difference of the training on business performance



3.4 Project management and administration

The project was led and co-ordinated by TSE from their offices in Eastleigh, Hampshire. As set out in the project tender document, the project team consisted of the following:

- Project Manager – overall responsibility for the project, overseeing its development and progress
- Training Co-ordinator – responsible for the day-to-day management of the project. The role included promoting skills development within the sectors; conducting TNAs and training plans for participating companies; developing relevant training courses/workshops and networking opportunities; co-ordinating input from partners; establishing the referral process of clients to other training providers and support services; and overseeing the administration of the project
- Project Administrator – responsible for the collection, monitoring, and reporting of financial information, beneficiary data, and output achievement internally and externally to partners and to the LSC.

3.4.1 Partnership

In addition to TSE core team, a project Steering Group was established comprised of representatives from the following organisations:

- Hampshire County Council
- Brockenhurst College
- Highbury College
- Train to Gain
- TSE (Hampshire sub-region)

The Steering Group met regularly and its role was to:

- Agree and confirm management of budgets, activities and outputs
- Review progress against project objectives;
- Develop appropriate monitoring systems that involve all key participant groups – steering group and other stakeholders.

Feedback from Steering Group members indicates that:

- Steering Group meetings were well organised and conducted
- Members felt they were able to make a useful contribution
- The training delivered by the project was of a high standard
- The project has made a real difference in the Tourism and Hospitality sector

3.4.2 Monitoring and evaluation

3.4.2.1 Project monitoring was undertaken by the TSE core team, overseen by the project Steering Group. TSE used an existing monitoring system to track project activity, beneficiary data and expenditure. Information on businesses was collected as they joined the project, together with details of the individual employees participating in training/network events.

3.4.2.3 An internal evaluation was undertaken after the first 9 months of operation of the project, as previously described. The interim evaluation report was primarily intended to satisfy the requirements of the funder (LSC) while, at the same time, providing guidance to the project Steering Group on how well the project had been implemented and was progressing.

3.4.3 Marketing

3.4.3.1 A range of marketing methods was used to promote the project to the target audience, including:

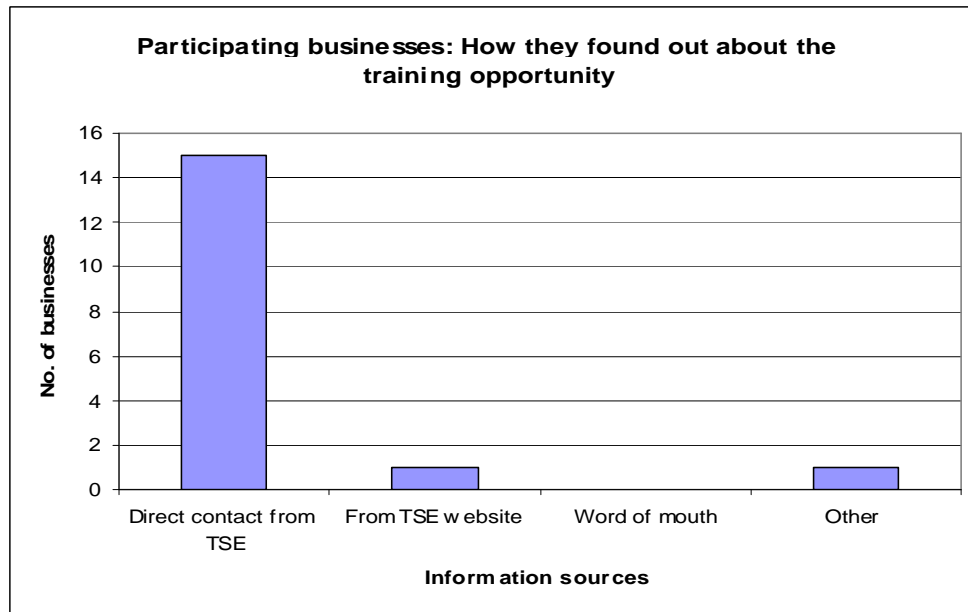
- Targeted mailing
- E-mail alerts
- Hampshire newsletter
- Awareness-raising events
- Engagement with business networks and partner organisations
- Direct contact with local businesses

3.4.3.2 Feedback from the project team suggests that the most successful methods were direct contact with businesses, potential partners and local networks, together with response to email alerts. The survey conducted by WPL with participating businesses supports this view, with the

overwhelming majority (15 of the 17 respondents) claiming they found out about the project through direct contact from TSE (see figure 7).

3.4.3.3 The least successful methods were direct mail and press advertising. In addition, securing beneficiaries through Business Link referrals proved less successful than expected.

Figure 7: How beneficiaries found out about the training opportunity



3.4.4. Involvement of partners and beneficiaries

3.4.4.1 In the early stages of the project, advice was taken from various industry representatives, including Hampshire Tourism Officers, and the project was discussed with potential delivery partners – e.g. local colleges.

3.4.4.2 The development of the project and proposed delivery arrangements were also informed by feedback from previous training projects. Once the project began, feedback was gained from participating businesses and beneficiaries. Feedback forms were analysed, and where feasible, suggestions taken on board when arranging future courses/workshops. For example, comments from participants were taken into account when deciding on the time, month and location of some future sessions.

3.4.4.3 In addition, a few of the training courses developed were in direct response to demand – for example, ‘Dealing with Difficult People’.

3.5 ESF cross-cutting themes

3.5.1 Equal Opportunities

3.5.1.1 Statistics

Over the original project period, the project had targets for the gender, age, ethnic origin and disability status of beneficiaries. These are given below with actual achievement. N.B. The target for the total number of beneficiaries recruited was increased by 90 for the project extension period 1/1/08-30/6/08, but no target breakdown of the additional 90 was set: therefore, overall actual performance is given in relation to the original target of 200.

Table 4: Gender

	Target No.	Actual No.
Male	82	171
Female	118	172
TOTAL	200*	343

* Increased to 340 following over-achievement in 2006-07 (also applies to following tables)

Table 5: Age

	Target no. of beneficiaries	Actual no. of beneficiaries
Young people (16-18)	40	5
Adults (19-24)	34	68
Adults (25-49)	116	165
People aged 50 years plus	10	105
TOTAL	200*	343

Table 6: Ethnicity

	Target No. of beneficiaries	Actual No. of beneficiaries
White – British	175	257
White - Irish	0	1
White – other	0	44
Mixed – white and Asian	10	0
Mixed – other	0	1
Asian or Asian British – Indian	7	13
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0	1
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	2

Asian or Asian British – other	8	7
Black or Black British - African	0	2
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	1
Other	0	3
Not known	0	11
TOTAL	200*	343

Table 7: Beneficiaries with a disability

	Target No.	Actual No.
With a disability	10	3
Without a disability or not known/not provided	190	340
TOTAL	200*	343

* Increased to 340 following over-achievement in 2006-07

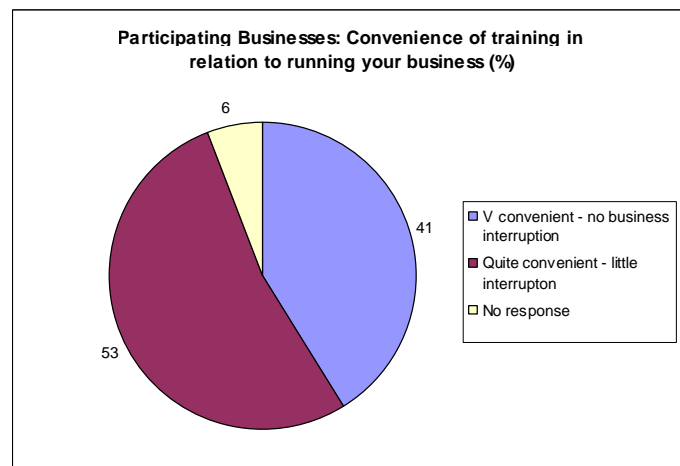
3.5.1.2 Promoting Equal Opportunities

To ensure the project supported and promoted equal opportunities, the following actions were undertaken:

- Marketing the project as widely as possible through targeted mailing, email alerts, personal contact, the TSE website, and through engaging with local business networks and partners
- Marketing the project to businesses on the TSE existing employer database, and to businesses with which TSE had no prior involvement, through the promotion of the project by local business networks and partners – approximately 60% of businesses recruited on to the project had not previously worked with TSE
- Running activities (awareness-raising events, training courses, peer-to-peer networking sessions) at times/dates/locations most convenient to employers – figure 8 (below) demonstrates that 94% of those who participated in the recent business survey felt that the training was very convenient or quite convenient in terms of its impact on day-to-day business running
- Gaining feedback from beneficiaries at training sessions and peer-to-peer networking events to discover how provision could be made more accessible, relevant and useful

- Provided alternative training provision – e.g. e-learning
- Using a course booking form that asked potential beneficiaries to state any particular requirements they might have – e.g. dietary requirements, any particular needs relating to disability, literacy deficiencies, etc.
- Always completing a full venue check prior to holding a training session/workshop to ensure that there was easy accessibility for all, including those with a physical disability – disabled toilets, entry ramps, lifts, hearing loops, etc.
- Bringing in trainers who were able to accommodate project beneficiaries with poor English language skills.
- Running courses/workshops which required little writing, accommodating any project beneficiaries with basic skills and/or English language needs
- Encouraging businesses to participate in the *Partners in Success* scheme, within which, advice and guidance on equal opportunities is a key element
- Collecting and monitoring beneficiary equal opportunities data, including gender, age, ethnicity and disability

Figure 8: Convenience of training



3.5.2 Use of ICT

3.5.2.1 Use in delivery

A. ICT was an integral part of the project. When undertaking the TNAs of participating businesses, ICT training needs were one of the training areas

explored. Various IT-related courses and workshops were run – including developing basic computer skills and sessions focused specifically on e-marketing for project beneficiaries. The project also experimented with an online training resource – the ‘Learning Burst’ CD.

B. The project has, where appropriate, provided employers with the opportunity to enhance ICT skills across the whole business, and has encouraged individual project beneficiaries with limited computer literacy to take advantage of the opportunities to access and utilise ICT facilities with greater competence.

3.5.2.2 Use in management

A. The project team has used ICT to administer the project on a day-to-day basis. It has been used to communicate with potential and actual project beneficiaries and partners through emails, email-alerts, the TSE website, partners’ websites.

B. IT programmes, principally MS Word, Excel and Access, have been used for monitoring and reporting processes. TSE already had a robust monitoring system in place for recording and monitoring beneficiary information, outputs and expenditure. This electronic system was used to monitor *Prosper through People*. The project also used the LSC’s Provider Online system to report beneficiary data to the LSC.

3.5.3 Sustainable Development

3.5.3.1 Sustainable development was described in the original tender document as addressing a combination of social, environmental and economic goals in terms of

- Providing opportunities to allow everyone to fulfil their potential
- Environmental enhancement and protection
- Providing the skills that businesses demand and require both now and in the future.

3.5.3.2 The learning activity provided through the project was designed to help overcome barriers to learning and motivate beneficiaries to continue learning beyond the lifetime of the project.

3.5.3.3 In terms of environmental enhancement and protection, the project sought to reduce the need for beneficiaries to travel to training sessions, and encouraged them to adopt smarter working techniques to reduce wastage and duplication. In addition, there were sustainable tourism workshops (Green Awareness)

3.5.4 Project sustainability

The target set for the project in terms of the sustainability of training put in place related to:

- Beneficiary learning progression through mainstream provision offered by *learndirect*, FE colleges, Work Based Learning providers and Business Link
- Successor projects via the *Prosper through People* partnership (this would require additional external funding)
- Sponsored peer-to-peer events

4. SUMMARY

4.1 Project successes

The major successes of the project have been:

4.1.1 Meeting and exceeding output and outcome targets – particularly in terms of the number of participating businesses (343 against a target of 340 – 60% of which had not previously worked with TSE) and the number of learners progressing to further linked learning (35 against a target of 21);

4.1.2 Gaining acceptance of the value of TNAs and resulting training activity;

4.1.3 Getting peer-to-peer networking operating and resulting in at least one network group (Southampton Small Accommodation Providers) continuing after the end of the project period;

4.1.4 Improvements in business performance resulting from the training reported by 88% of respondents to a qualitative survey undertaken independently of the project;

4.1.5 Attracting ethnic minority participants in the training programme (more than 20% of all workshop attendees);

4.1.6 Efficient project management and administration – evidenced by responses to a partner survey and the data/reports provided for this evaluation by the project team.

4.2 Challenges

The major challenges faced by the project were:

4.2.1 Gaining acceptance of electronic learning beyond an initial pilot exercise. The 'Learning Bursts' CD ROM was generally well received, however, it appears that participating businesses made little use has been made of it as an additional learning tool. This was mainly put down to lack of time/resources to set up in-company training arrangements.

4.2.2 Getting sufficient follow-through on training provision generally within participating businesses following their involvement in the project (for similar reasons as above)

4.3 Lessons learned

The main lessons learned as a result of running this project are:

4.3.1 It can take longer than expected to get results from a new project: it is often the case that projects start later than anticipated, take longer to raise awareness of their benefits amongst the target audience and have to contend with seasonality issues in sectors like Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure. In future, it might be worth reflecting these possibilities in the output/outcome profile by having relatively low targets in the first few months, building up as the project progresses and falling again as the project reaches its conclusion;

4.3.2 The timing of workshops needs to take account of business seasonality and pressure points;

4.3.3 Sufficient account needs to be taken of individual business needs for training on issues which may not have been anticipated when the project was first formulated, allowing opportunities for input from businesses themselves on what types of training they would find most beneficial;

4.3.4 The most successful forms of marketing for projects of this type are direct contact with businesses where a relationship has already been established and through partnerships and networks with which target beneficiaries are actively involved.

4.4 Conclusions

4.4.1 This has been a well run and effective project. It has provided opportunities for a large number of SMEs in the Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure sector who may not usually participate and benefit from training. These benefits have been demonstrated to a substantial proportion of the participating businesses through improved business performance. There has been a wide scale recognition of the need to provide additional training within SMEs. The challenge, however, is for that training actually to be put in place, given the pressures under which such businesses often operate and the relatively high level of staff turnover that applies in this industry.

4.4.2 Free training is always welcome – particularly if it is of high quality and can be provided where and when the recipients really want it. Without the

funding to support the continuation of such training, however, it is difficult to see how further training might be achieved within an industry where margins are often tight and training needs analysis is not an everyday activity. This relative lack of training effort has been demonstrated in the responses gained to the business survey undertaken as part of this evaluation where 41% of respondents indicated that they had undertaken no training within the 12 months prior to their involvement in the project.

4.4.3 The bulk of participants involved in the training programme organised through this project were aged 25+: 21% were aged 16-24, compared with 48% aged 25-49 and 31% aged 50+. Despite relatively large numbers of young people being employed in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure, relatively few appear to have been picked up by this project. This means that there could be considerable work still to do in getting more young people trained in the sector.

4.4.4 Less than 1% of project beneficiaries declared a disability against a target of 5%. It is not possible to say whether this was because there were relatively low number of disabled people working in the businesses in which the project was involved, whether there were any particular difficulties associated with their involvement if higher numbers actually existed, or whether those businesses with a higher proportion of disabled employees were not successfully targeted.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the information gained through this evaluation, it is possible to make the following recommendations in terms of potential future activity.

5.1 There needs to be more flexibility in how training is organised for SMEs in the Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure sector. Standard college courses involving significant off-site attendance, for example, are obviously not appropriate to the needs of busy small operators. They appreciate the opportunity of tailored training packages offered at times and venues convenient to them – particularly if they do not have to cover their cost – and would probably do more training if the means could be found to do it cost-effectively. The problem does not seem to be getting them to appreciate the value of training to their bottom line – rather than finding the means and resources to undertake it when and where convenient.

5.2 The nature of any future training might need to take account of relatively low levels of basic skills in SMEs in the Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure sector and disproportionately high levels of migrant/ethnic minority workers. Training which involves relatively little written work and where account can be effectively taken of materials which help those with ESOL needs are likely to be much more attractive to businesses than that which requires the building of a largely written portfolio of evidence.

5.3 If electronic learning packages are to be used in the future (similar to the 'Learning Burst' CD ROM developed for this project), it would make sense include them as part of a 'blended' learning programme, combining both electronic and traditional learning methods.

5.4 The obvious success of this project suggests that organisations like TSE are best placed to understand the needs of the sector in terms of the development of its workforce and could implement further high quality learning programmes if the funding were available to do so. Resources made available to FE colleges and training providers through mainstream learning programmes could be bent to accommodate such needs, if the right combination of delivery agencies could be found.

PROSPER THROUGH PEOPLE EVALUATION: APPENDIX 1

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARTICIPATING BUSINESSES

Name of your business:
Your name:

Please describe your business by ticking the appropriate boxes below:

Business type		No. of employees	
Hotel/guest house	<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than 10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restaurant/café	<input type="checkbox"/>	More than 10, less than 50	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	50, less than 100	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other – please state:	<input type="checkbox"/>	100 +	<input type="checkbox"/>

How did you find out about the training opportunity?

Direct contact from Tourism South East	<input type="checkbox"/>	Word of mouth recommendation	<input type="checkbox"/>
From the Tourism South East website	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other – please state:	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please indicate your reason(s) for taking up the training offered by Tourism South East

To increase business performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	To increase staff skills	<input type="checkbox"/>
To improve staff motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	To reduce staff turnover	<input type="checkbox"/>
To prepare for business expansion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other – please state:	<input type="checkbox"/>

How important was the fact that training was being offered at subsidised rates?

Very important	<input type="checkbox"/>	Important	<input type="checkbox"/>
Made a difference	<input type="checkbox"/>	Would have participated anyway	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please indicate the amount of staff training undertaken in the 12 months before you got involved in this project

None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quite a lot	<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular staff training undertaken	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please indicate where the training provided by Tourism South East was carried out

All on my premises	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some on my premises, some elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>
All elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>	Where?	

Please indicate how convenient the training was in relation to running your business

Very convenient – no business interruption	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quite convenient – only a little interruption	<input type="checkbox"/>
Caused some difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inconvenient – significant interruption	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you received a visit from Gill Heighington of Tourism South East to discuss your training needs before any sessions were attended, how useful was it?

Very useful – helped a lot	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quite useful – some help	<input type="checkbox"/>
Little help	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not useful at all	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you received feedback Gill Heighington after her visit, how useful was it?

Very useful – helped a lot	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quite useful – some help	<input type="checkbox"/>
Little help	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not useful at all	<input type="checkbox"/>

How well was the training organised and delivered?

Very well – high professional standard	<input type="checkbox"/>	Well – good professional standard	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reasonably well	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not at all well	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you were provided with a ‘Learning Burst’ CD, how useful did you find it?

Very useful – helped a lot	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quite useful – some help	<input type="checkbox"/>
Little help	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not useful at all	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you attended any networking meetings, how useful did you find them?

Very useful – helped a lot	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quite useful – some help	<input type="checkbox"/>
Little help	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not useful at all	<input type="checkbox"/>

How much difference overall would you say the training has made to your business?

A great deal – much improved performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some improvement in performance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marginal improvement in performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	No noticeable improvement in performance	<input type="checkbox"/>

How much more staff training are you likely to undertake as a result of this project?

Lots more – I am really fired up!	<input type="checkbox"/>	As much as I can reasonably manage	<input type="checkbox"/>
A little when I can	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unlikely to organise further training soon	<input type="checkbox"/>

If applicable, how accessible/appropriate was the training for disabled employees, employees from ethnic minority backgrounds, any others with particular needs

No difficulties experienced	<input type="checkbox"/>	Only marginal difficulty – no real impact	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some difficulty had to be overcome	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very difficult for such employees to participate	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please add any other comments of your own in the box below: we will be pleased to take them into account in our evaluation

Would you be willing for us to telephone you to discuss anything further?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
-----	--------------------------	----	--------------------------

If “YES”, please give the telephone number (with STD code) for us to use and the most convenient time/day for us to contact you

PROSPER THROUGH PEOPLE EVALUATION: APPENDIX 2

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PROJECT PARTNERS

Name of your organisation:
Your name:

Please describe your role in the project by ticking the appropriate box below:

Delivery partner (providing training)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Supporter/promoter of project	<input type="checkbox"/>
Steering Group membership only	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other – please state below:	<input type="checkbox"/>

How did you come to be involved in the project?

Direct contact from Tourism South East	<input type="checkbox"/>	Offer of assistance (previous supporter)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nominated by another Group member	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other – please state below:	<input type="checkbox"/>

How important was it for you to be involved in the project?

Very important	<input type="checkbox"/>	Important	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nice to have been asked	<input type="checkbox"/>	No great benefit accruing	<input type="checkbox"/>

How well have Steering Group meetings been organised and conducted?

Very well	<input type="checkbox"/>	Well	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acceptably	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not well	<input type="checkbox"/>

What contribution have you been able to make to the Steering Group?

A significant contribution	<input type="checkbox"/>	A useful contribution	<input type="checkbox"/>
A marginal contribution	<input type="checkbox"/>	Little worthwhile contribution	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:			

How well do you believe the training provided by the project has been delivered?

Very well – high professional standard	<input type="checkbox"/>	Well – good professional standard	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reasonably well	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not at all well	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:			

If you have had an opportunity to watch the ‘Learning Burst’ CD, how useful do you believe it is?

Very useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Useful	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marginally useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not useful at all	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:			

How much difference overall do you feel the project has made to the Hospitality & Tourism industry locally?

A great deal	<input type="checkbox"/>	A significant difference	<input type="checkbox"/>
A marginal difference	<input type="checkbox"/>	No real difference at all	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:			

Please add any other comments of your own in the box below: we will be pleased to take them into account in our evaluation

Would you be willing for us to telephone you to discuss anything further?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
-----	--------------------------	----	--------------------------

If "YES", please give the telephone number (with STD code) for us to use and the most convenient time/day for us to contact you

PROSPER THROUGH PEOPLE EVALUATION: APPENDIX 3

**CASE STUDY – SOUTHAMPTON SMALL ACCOMMODATION
PROVIDERS FORUM**

In March 2007, Tourism South East brought together a group of small accommodation providers from Southampton to discuss various issues pertinent to their business. Guest speakers were invited from the local Police and Fire services, giving business owners the opportunity to ask questions and voice their opinions to key figures in the community.

Through the *Prosper through People* project, the group discussed specific training needs across their businesses. As a result, customised training courses such as a Housekeeping and Marketing were delivered.

Such was the success of the first session that two further meetings were set up and funded through the *Prosper through People* project. Ray Proudley from Alcantara Guest House, one of the co-founding members of the group, was confident that the meetings would continue beyond the lifetime of the project:

I can't see the withdrawal of funding being an issue – the group is very enthusiastic and we can all take it in turns to host the meetings.

Ray went on to praise the value of the LSC/ESF co-financing:

In many ways, having these meetings funded has been far more beneficial to us than attending a free one-day course. This way we are only taking a short time away from the business, plus we can focus on the issues that are most important to our business.

The formation and development of the group has been enthusiastically received by Southampton Tourism. David Wood, Tourism Manager for Southampton City Council, commented:

We attempted, without success, to establish a Guest House Association two years ago to improve communications within this fragmented yet vital accommodation sector in the city. These meetings have now resulted in the Southampton small accommodation providers agreeing to establish a formal association which will enhance their profile within the city as well as establishing important links with the business and tourism community.

The group has also attracted interest from local organisations such as *Destination Southampton* and *Walking Distance* – both of which regularly attend meetings and have forged a closer working relationship the group.

PROSPER THROUGH PEOPLE EVALUATION: APPENDIX 4

CASE STUDY – WEST QUAY CARS

Taxi Drivers are all self-employed. There is an industry-specific qualification for taxi drivers (BTEC Level 2 NVQ in Road Passenger Transport - Taxi and Private Hire Industry) but, to date, the funding and resources to provide the necessary training have not been available in Southampton.

Lee Haynes was at the point of introducing a new aspect to his business – *Tour Hampshire* – a personalised taxi tour (particularly aimed at cruise passengers passing through Southampton) and wanted to get Tourism South East involved. This led to a chance discussion with Gill Heighington from TSE about the ESF/LSC funding available via the *Prosper through People* project. This was an excellent opportunity for Lee: what was on offer was basically the *Welcome Host* training programme, but with the opportunity to adapt it to the needs of a taxi business.

As a progressive businessman, Lee could see the potential to lead the way in Southampton by providing recognised training for his drivers through the *Prosper through People* project. Some of his more senior drivers attended an initial workshop, which was very successful and led to a second session a few months later. Those who completed the training were subsequently given the opportunity to meet the Mayor of Southampton at a presentation event.

The third and final training session took place just after Easter 2008. It was further enhanced to take into account the particular circumstances of 'reluctant participants' and was delivered as a half day session.

All the drivers of West Quay Cars have now been given the opportunity to attend the training and realise the benefits to be gained from it. In Lee's view, the training has raised the standard of taxi driving in the city and improved West Quay Cars' reputation as a 'quality business'. Furthermore, it has enabled drivers to be offered more prestigious and lucrative work – e.g. with leading hotels and corporate clients.

Lee feels the training programme fits perfectly with his particular needs. With the volume of cruise passengers set to reach 1 million this season, his drivers will be well equipped to provide a courteous and knowledgeable welcome that will hopefully encourage tourists to stay a while in the city and boost the local economy to the benefit of all.