

2021-2024



WEST NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COLLEGE  
**EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT  
STRATEGY**

Building Prosperity Through Partnership







## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Employer Engagement Strategy is to ensure that the College is placed at the centre of its local communities' regeneration and prosperity. It will achieve this through the generation of a skilled workforce and a relevant and enriching curriculum that meets the needs of the local economy today and in the future. Our mission, vision and values provide a clear route map for our ambitions for the future and our Strategic Plan sets out the quantifiable ways in which we will achieve this.

Through specific actions within this strategy, the college will ensure that it is **agile** in responding to employers' and the economy's needs; is **renowned** for producing young people and adults that are work-ready; and is **first choice** for the quality of its delivery and customer service.

## OUR MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

**MISSION:** To provide skills to enable students, employer partners and our community to thrive.

**VISION:** We will become a force for raising aspirations across our communities, where high-performing staff encourage students to stretch the boundaries of their potential and, in partnership with employers, develop the workforce of the future.

### VALUES:

**R**espect

**I**ntegrity

**C**ollaboration

**H**igh **E**xpectations

**R**esponsibility





# STRATEGIC AIMS

The College's strategic aims as they relate to this strategy are set out below. Aims related to the development of our employees and our infrastructure which will support the achievement of our Employer Engagement Strategy are covered in the People Strategy and IT Strategy respectively. The college has developed a Curriculum Strategy and these documents should therefore be read in conjunction with this document.

## AIM 1: **LEARNERS**

We will encourage and inspire our learners to aim high in life and at work and equip them to achieve these ambitions.

From an employer engagement perspective, in order to achieve this aim:

- We need employers to engage with our learners throughout their time at College to inspire and educate them on the opportunities that are available.
- We need a framework for employability that is well-respected and consistently used across the organisation.
- We need all learners to develop a career development plan with real experience of the workplace at its heart.
- We need a ladder of opportunity for young people to experience the world of work with the ultimate goal of progression to employment or apprenticeships.
- We need to ensure that no learner is left behind through the development of traineeships, supported internships and assisted apprenticeships and through partnership working with the local authority to ensure that young people who have experience of local authority care progress.
- We need to equip our learners with the skills that employers need not only now but in the future.
- We need to prepare our learners for a changing and dynamic jobs market where the jobs 20 years from now don't exist today.





## AIM 2: **EMPLOYEES**

We will equip our staff to enable our learners to reach their full potential.

From an employer engagement perspective in order to achieve this aim:

- We need to ensure that we work collaboratively across the institution and with external partners to offer a breadth and depth of skills to meet employers' business needs.
- We need to ensure that we have teams, structures and appropriate skills-sets within our employer engagement team to move from a sales-based conversation to relationship management.
- We need to ensure our employees have a deep understanding of the needs of employers and the needs of their business so that we can meet their needs.
- We need to ensure that employees are confident to engage employers in the design, delivery and future proofing of our curriculum.
- We need to ensure that employees understand how to embed employability skills within all aspects of college delivery.
- We need to support our employees to keep their industry knowledge and professional skills up to-date.

## AIM 3: **EMPLOYERS**

We will work with local employers to provide our learners with the skills they need today and those that will help them thrive in the future.

From an employer engagement perspective in order to achieve this aim:

- We need to develop processes and systems that facilitate in-depth, multi-dimensional conversations with employers which focusses on future skills needs.
- We need to find simple and effective ways to articulate the college's offer for employers.
- We need to work collaboratively with other partners, in particular NTU, to develop a consistent and joined-up conversation with employers about their needs.
- We need to provide a seamless offer for employers' current and future skills needs in partnership with others.
- We need to work with employers so that they inform our curriculum development and delivery.
- We need to be agile in our development of programmes and training to meet the current and future skills needs of local businesses.
- We need the highest levels of service and delivery, based on the segmentation of employers.
- We need holistic solutions for employers in managing their talent, which capitalises on all available funding streams and includes work placement, supported internships and assisted apprenticeships.
- We need to make it easy for employers to engage with us regardless of where and with who that initial engagement takes place.



#### AIM 4: **COMMUNITY**

We will be a significant force for raising aspirations throughout the communities we serve.

From an employer engagement perspective in order to achieve this aim:

- We need to be a central partner with local regeneration teams to ensure that our local communities have the talent pool that makes businesses want to invest.
- We need to work with employers to paint a picture of the opportunities they have for future employees.
- We need to promote local opportunities for employment that encourage our learners to look locally for their next steps.
- We need to work with employers and our university partners in developing the higher-level skills needed for tomorrow.
- We need meaningful partnerships with employers to help enrich a learner's programme of study and raise their personal aspirations.

#### AIM 5: **FINANCES**

We will sustain the financial strength required to deliver high-quality services in response to new challenges.

From an employer engagement perspective in order to achieve this aim:

- We need partnerships with levy-paying employers that maximise their levy spend and income into the College.
- We need to recruit with integrity to minimise a loss of income through withdrawals.
- We need people resources that are optimised at all times by recruiting apprentices to our capacity.
- We need to invest in people resources in areas for potential growth and that meet employer needs.
- We need to identify external and project funding to support our work with employers.





## AIM 6: **INFRASTRUCTURE**

We will continue to invest in efficient and well-managed facilities, systems and resources to support outstanding learning.

From an employer engagement perspective in order to achieve this aim:

- We need to develop our online presence so we have an effective and easy-to-navigate 'shop front' for our employers.
- We need to use our employer partnerships to inform our investment in industry-standard facilities and equipment that helps to prepare learners for future employment.
- We need to develop effective systems that enable us to communicate the progress of trainees with employers.
- We need effective systems to capture the feedback of employers in order to inform improvement and development.

## **A FOCUS ON LOCAL DELIVERY – A 'BUSINESS HUB' FOR COMMUNITY PROSPERITY AND REGENERATION**

The College's Strategic Plan sets out the College's ambition to become an anchor institution for regeneration and prosperity. The College has stated its intention to bring delivery back to a more local footprint and will work predominantly with employers within an hour's drive cloud of the college (see appendix 1).

The key principles underpinning this local strategy are:

- 1** The College will prioritise close partnership working with employers in Mansfield, Ashfield, North East Derbyshire, Bolsover and Newark and Sherwood (its local communities) in ensuring that learners are provided with high-quality opportunities for local work placement and employment.
- 2** The College will seek to extend its work with levy-paying employers within the D2N2 area.
- 3** The College will consider nationally-based apprenticeship delivery when:
  - a** The employer has a substantial local base (i.e. within Mansfield and Ashfield or D2N2).
  - b** High-quality can be guaranteed within the financial constraints of delivery.
  - c** If the employer does not have a local footprint, working with the employer would provide significant benefit to on-campus learners and the wider community.

When opportunities arise for national delivery, the apprenticeship engagement team or assistant principal will provide a brief business case which will be considered by the executive team and, in some cases, depending on the scale of delivery, the board of governors prior to any approval.



# EMPLOYER SEGMENTATION



## STRATEGIC

In order to define a consistent standard of service to employers, the College has developed an employer segmentation strategy that clearly sets out the offer for a range of employers, regardless of their size and potential connection to the College. This is summarised below:

The aim of strategic employer partners is to create joint value for the College and the employer. Relationships are long-term and require an investment from both the College and the employer at senior level. Strategic employer links may not 'place' significant value with the College in terms of income or training immediately. Employers within this category may be existing partners or those targeted by the College. Ongoing relationship management is owned centrally.

## CRITICAL

Critical employers are those who would generate significant value in terms of income. The focus of the relationship approach would be on risk management; losing these employers' business would pose significant risk to the College's income streams or ability to meet its strategic objectives, which in turn may indirectly impact on income streams. Ongoing relationship management is overseen centrally.

## TRANSACTIONAL

These are 'bread and butter' relationships; they may be short term i.e. a one off transaction. This is where the bulk of our employer partners will live in terms of our segmentation. Ongoing relationship management will sit with delivery areas with little engagement beyond point-of-sale from the central team.









WHAT DOES EACH LEVEL TRANSLATE TO IN TERMS OF SERVICE OFFERING?

SEGMENT	RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT	JOINT WORKING	SENIOR LEVEL ENGAGEMENT
STRATEGIC	<p>Dedicated, named, single point of contact for day-to-day liaison and communication from the central team.</p> <p>Where apprenticeships are delivered, monthly update reports on progress and quality.</p> <p>Bi-monthly face-to-face meetings with the contract manager and, where appropriate, curriculum manager(s).</p> <p>Flagged on CRM as strategic employer.</p>	<p>Working alongside to understand the strategic direction of the organisation and how the College can help plug skills gaps.</p> <p>Part of strategic employer forum for their sector and invited to 'gap analyse' the curriculum to ensure it is fit for purpose.</p> <p>Partner in funding opportunity bids.</p> <p>'Free' CPD offer for employees up to a certain value – offered as infill to existing programmes of study.</p> <p>Potential for employer to contribute to delivery for students.</p> <p>Involvement in quality assurance and quality improvement processes at delivery level.</p> <p>Potential to develop employer-based academies.</p> <p>Recruitment service offer.</p>	<p>'Task force' established at the start of each new relationship and chaired by vice principal.</p> <p>Regular relationship review meetings chaired by vice principal.</p> <p>Quarterly review meeting with vice principal(s), contract manager and head(s) of department(s).</p> <p>Annual dinner/meeting with the principal and senior governors.</p>





SEGMENT	RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT	JOINT WORKING	SENIOR LEVEL ENGAGEMENT
CRITICAL	<p>Contract managed from within the central team. Monthly telephone/virtual check in in terms of service and offer.</p> <p>Bi-monthly progress reports sent to lead contact within the organisation.</p> <p>Quarterly meeting with apprenticeships specialist to review progress of apprentices.</p> <p>Day-to-day communication flow through curriculum team with contract manager kept in the loop.</p>	<p>Deep understanding from the College on business strategy and how the College can work together to fulfil skills needs.</p> <p>Invited to participate in sector based forums with other employers and shape the direction of travel from a curriculum point of view.</p> <p>Potential for sponsorship of the curriculum area.</p> <p>Employer potentially engaged in industry days and setting of real project briefs.</p> <p>Recruitment service offer.</p>	<p>Regular communication with contract manager and head of department with the employer.</p> <p>Annual review process with the vice principal, contract manager and head(s) of department(s).</p>
TRANSACTIONAL	<p>Sales leads come from either central team or repeat business through specialists.</p> <p>All links and communication beyond point-of-sale channelled through delivery teams.</p> <p>Relationship with central team is around contracts and enrolment, recruitment and complaints.</p>	<p>Little opportunity for joint partnership working, although the College would invite employers to seminars and workshops. College would recruit for their skills needs and we would invite to employer based forums and workshops.</p>	<p>No engagement at all unless critical and serious complaint.</p>



## THE COLLEGE'S OFFER FOR OUR EMPLOYERS

The College has developed an offering that goes beyond apprenticeships and other funded training programmes. This offer is based on four streams and will form the basis of all conversations that we have with local employers.

### WEST NOTTS' SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS

#### DEVELOP YOUR FUTURE TALENT

- Work placement
- Industry placement
- Supported Internships
- Apprenticeships
- AEB JCP programmes
- Recruitment services.

#### DEVELOP SKILLS FOR YOUR SUCCESS

- Sponsorship of curriculum
- Developing the curriculum offer
- Bespoke training offers
- Seminars and workshops
- Knowledge, skills and behaviours.

#### GIVE SOMETHING BACK

- CSR
- Industry days
- Sessions for students
- Real-life project briefs
- Learning companies.

#### DEVELOP YOUR CURRENT WORKFORCE

- Apprenticeships
- AEB
- English, maths and IT
- Lifetime skills guarantee
- Short, full-cost programmes.









# OUR EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY – 3 PILLARS FOR SUCCESS

In order to achieve our strategic aims we have identified three pillars on which our Employer Engagement Strategy rests.

## 1 | AGILE AND HIGH-QUALITY EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

We will:

- Ensure that we have a deep understanding of the organisation we are working with to enable us to tailor skills interventions to meet their needs.
- Develop the concept of employer segmentation to better focus effort and energy.
- Provide training and development for employees so they are better able to understand and respond to the needs of an employer.
- Develop a clear and compelling 'sell' for onboarding strategic employer partners.
- Ensure that our curriculum planning and direction of travel meets the skills needs of the local economy.
- Work collaboratively with the local regeneration teams, the Chamber of Commerce, LEP and CBI to identify opportunities for future business.
- Work collaboratively with NTU to develop a single offer for employers from Level 2 to 7.
- Ensure that our curriculum development processes are agile, responsive and engage employers at every stage.
- Develop a strong network of employer advocates who help 'sell' our products for us.
- Continually review our employer relationships to consider wider engagement opportunities.





## 2 | RENOWNED FOR CREATING YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS WHO ARE WORK READY

We will:

- Implement the employability framework and ensure that no learner goes into the workplace without first having met the basic standards.
- Develop the concept of back-fill for our apprenticeships, using extended work placement to facilitate this.
- Develop the concept of an 'employer academy', whereby employers are embedded within our processes of curriculum development, are engaged within the professional development of our employees and are able to offer structured and significant work placement that leads to apprenticeships or employment.
- Ensure that employers are working closely with the curriculum in the delivery and development of live project briefs, employer-based talks and industry visits.
- Develop ladders of opportunity which may include supported internships, traineeships and flexible study programmes to ensure that all learners can progress into employment and that no learner is left behind.
- Create 'golden threads' to employment in all of our vocational curriculum offer at all levels.
- Positively and visibly celebrate students who move into work with local employers.

## 3 | FIRST CHOICE FOR EMPLOYERS – THE 'BUSINESS HUB' FOR COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS PROSPERITY AND GROWTH

We will:

- Develop a reputation for excellence so that we become known as the provider of choice for our local community.
- Develop powerful partnerships with other high-quality local providers to meet the skills needs of local business.
- Work with regeneration and other inward investment efforts to ensure that we are part of a compelling sales proposition for new businesses into the area.
- Become the skills referral point for regeneration teams working with businesses who want to grow.
- Develop a recruitment offer for local employers that provides high-quality, local employees for their businesses from our student talent pool.
- Develop an employer-based seminar series that helps business to share practice, develop and grow.
- To help our community gain high-quality employees through partnerships with DWP and engagement in schemes such as Kickstart and Restart.
- To develop short skills-development programmes for small employers through the use of AEB, ESF, lifetime skills guarantee and other funding streams.
- Play our part in the place shaping agenda by being active members of Mansfield and Ashfield 2020, Discover Ashfield, The Mansfield Place Board, the Mansfield and Ashfield Ambassadors Team and Future High Streets projects amongst other initiatives.



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