



# Developing Best Practice in Work-Based Learning - An Evaluation of the Career Traineeship Pilot Final Report

28 March 2018





# Developing Best Practice in Work-Based Learning - An Evaluation of the Career Traineeship Pilot

## Final Report

A report submitted by [ICF Consulting Services Limited](#)  
in association with

[Fitzpatrick Associates](#)

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## Abbreviations

C&G	City and Guilds
CMETB	Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board
CT	Career Traineeship
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DETB	Donegal Education and Training Board
EC	European Commission
ETB	Education and Training Board
FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair
FET	Further Education and Training
GRETB	Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board
IHF	Irish Hotels Federation
KCETB	Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board
LCETB	Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board
MSLETB	Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board
NCDB	National Course Database
NSG	National Steering Group
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSP	Occupational Skills Profile
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WBL	Work-based Learning
WPS	Workplace Supervision/Workplace Supervisor

## Executive summary

Multiple sources of evidence and policy reviews have highlighted the positive role to be played by education and training interventions that combine on- and off-the job learning, and the high potential of such programmes to simultaneously address the needs of employers and the needs and labour market progression of learners (for example, European Commission, 2013a<sup>1</sup>)

The potential of such programmes lies in their capacity to provide targeted education and training interventions that respond to local employer needs, and are appropriate to the skills, capabilities and development needs of the unemployed and job-seekers, and that combine both specific and general occupational skill development in ways that provide people with enhanced employability over the medium and long-term (European Commission, 2013b<sup>2</sup>).

Career Traineeship (CT) is a model of combined work-based and classroom-based learning aimed at providing a course of specific skills development for career progression in distinct economic sectors and occupations. It seeks to build on national and international best practice in work-based learning (WBL) initiatives for job seekers, with a model of training provision that is employer-led and directly responsive to skills demand in the local and national economy.

ICF Consulting Services Limited, together with its partner, Fitzpatrick Associates Economic Consultants, was appointed by SOLAS in early 2016 to undertake an evaluation of the Pilot CT initiative it has jointly implemented with a number of ETBs. This report presents the Final Report of the evaluation.

**Chapter 1 of the report gives a short background to the study and outlines the evaluation's methodology and objectives.**

**Chapters 2 and 3 describe the policy context and background to career traineeships and WBL models and describe how the CT model was developed; its key components and features, and the national and international literature concerning the effectiveness and success of such work-based learning models.**

The impetus to develop the CT model arose from the growing recognition of the positive role of WBL in simultaneously addressing employer and learner needs, and recognition in the *Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2014 – 2019*<sup>3</sup>, of the future importance of both apprenticeships and traineeships among appropriate interventions that have WBL at their core.

The model was developed in cognisance of the reformed FET sector in Ireland, the respective policy, funding, and delivery roles of the Department of Education and Skills (DES), SOLAS and the Education and Training Boards (ETBs), and the need for any new or pilot traineeship model to be capable of being adopted and followed in specific sectors and locations, with each application being a genuinely local and bottom-up structure involving real and thorough partnership and collaboration.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Work-Based Learning in Europe, Practices and Policy Pointers', European Commission (2013a)

<sup>2</sup> 'Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners', European Commission, December (2013b). <http://ec.europa.eu/apprentice-trainee-success-factors>

<sup>3</sup> 'Further Education and Training Strategy, 2014-2019' SOLAS, Department of Education and Skills

The Irish Government's *Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020*<sup>4</sup> has confirmed the intention to significantly grow work-based learning over the coming five years using the apprenticeship and traineeship modes of learning and skills development. The target has been set for new traineeship enrolments of 5,000 per annum by 2020, from a baseline of 2,400 in 2016, and a sharp increase in the number of new or relaunched traineeships to enable this.

The CT model consists of four core pillars which include Needs Identification, Employer Partnership, Collaborative Programme Development and Integration of Directed and Work-Based Learning. A critical and distinguishing feature of the model is that applications of it will have a genesis in nationally and locally identified needs, requiring a response involving core modules but with the flexibility to address local employer requirements. It is being piloted in a number of regions of the country in a partnership process involving primarily SOLAS, ETBs and local employers.

**Chapter 4 presents an overview of the CT programmes reviewed for this evaluation and details of CT provision overall.** Eight CT pilot programmes were reviewed as part of the evaluation which involved six ETBs. Four of the CT programmes reviewed are in the hospitality sector, two in the engineering sector, while two have an occupational focus on digital sales and marketing. These are a sub-set of the 32 CT programmes that had been completed, were being delivered or were in the development stage as at September 2017.

**Chapter 5 presents detailed findings and results in relation to the core pillars of the model.** The model, as developed in partnership with SOLAS, ETBs, employer representative bodies and employers, is reflective of current best practice and has contributed significantly to developing the capacity of the key stakeholders involved in managing the provision of CTs.

The CT model of training programme delivery has proven both effective and efficient in the design, development and delivery of training targeted at identified labour market skills needs. Key findings include:

- The 51 trainees who had completed the CTs highlighted in the evaluation had high completion and qualification rates (70%); and
- High levels of employment since completing the programme (98%), of which 72% were with employers that had hosted the trainees and 28% were with other employers;
- Employers remarked upon the commitment, skills and job-readiness of the trainees on completion and a number also commented on the cost savings this represented, the lack of any learning curve, their immediate productivity and the fact that core competencies are in place prior to employment.
- Of the 164 trainees who had completed CTs overall, 94% were employed after the programme finished.

Looking ahead, all of the structures, processes, procedures, guidelines and supports developed as part of the pilots favourably position ETBs to further enhance their provision of training in response to identified labour market skill needs.

**Chapter 6 presents overall conclusions and recommendations.** With 18 programme iterations either complete or in delivery phase, and another 13 in development, the model has already shown its capacity for cascading, and since first conceived the model's adoption has increased across both ETBs (the majority of which have or are planning to deliver a CT),

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<sup>4</sup> 'Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeships and Traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020' Department of Education and Skills



as well as industry sectors (currently with seven sectoral applications in development or delivery).

All stakeholders gained in terms of their own learning from involvement in the CT pilots and many lessons have emerged:

- The evidence and findings of the pilot confirm that the development and application of the model is welcomed by employers, ETBs and trainees, as being relevant to each of their circumstances, and capable of supporting their long-term goals and ambitions.
- The model has built the capacity of ETBs in their role in enterprise engagement and support, as well as in developing and designing innovative models of training programme development and provision.
- For trainees, the findings are that the CT model offers an opportunity to enhance knowledge, skills, and competence, to gain tangible work experience and proficiency in applying those skills and capabilities in real work settings, and access to employment as well as recognised qualifications to support future career ambitions.
- For employers, it was found that the model can effectively fill recognised skill gaps, enhance productivity and thereby support critical business goals.
- Over the period of developing and applying the model in pilot form, a lot of experience, knowledge, capacity and resources have been built up nationally and within ETBs, all of which will support and underpin its future and wider effective and efficient application. Its development and early roll-out has depended highly on dedicated and structured central support, although the level of direct central support, particularly proactivity on the part of SOLAS, will diminish as ETBs become more experienced and develop greater self-sufficiency in developing and delivering repeat and new career traineeships, and as they develop their supports for local enterprise and widen their scope of WBL programmes and opportunities.

The model lends itself to wider application (cascading), is capable of operating at a greater scale, and has proved itself to be sustainable, and a range of recommendations are made to ensure it does so as effectively and efficiently as possible based on the experiences of the pilot phase.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Multiple sources of evidence and policy reviews have highlighted the positive role to be played by education and training interventions that combine on- and off-the job learning, and the high potential of such programmes to simultaneously address the needs of employers and the needs and labour market progression of learners (for example, European Commission 2013a<sup>5</sup>).

The potential of such programmes lies in their capacity to provide targeted education and training interventions that respond to local employer needs and are appropriate to the skills, capabilities and development needs of the unemployed and job-seekers, and that combine both specific and general occupational skill development in ways that provide people with enhanced employability over the medium and long-term (European Commission, 2013b<sup>6</sup>).

There have been numerous models of training and skill development that encompass elements of classroom and/or work-based learning in the past in Ireland, including the apprenticeship programme and the FÁS traineeship programme. The 2014-2019 FET Strategy<sup>7</sup> however identified a particular role for work-based learning (WBL) initiatives such as apprenticeships and traineeships in providing an important mechanism for the FET sector to respond in a flexible way to meet the specific skill needs of companies, while at the same time ensuring that the educational standards and qualifications of job-seekers are complemented by appropriate work-based learning and job-readiness.

Early in 2017 the Irish Government launched its “Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020”. This confirmed the intention that Ireland aims to significantly grow work-based learning over the coming five years using the apprenticeship and traineeship modes of learning and skills development. The Action Plan includes a target for new traineeship enrolments of 5,000 per annum by 2020, from a baseline of 2,400 in 2016, and a sharp increase in the number of new or relaunched traineeships to enable this. Targets in the Action Plan are outlined in Annex 1. SOLAS established a Traineeship Steering Group in 2017 to steer the on-going development and rollout of traineeships. Separate to this evaluation, SOLAS is carrying out a review of pre-2016 traineeships with the view to refreshing them to support achievement of the Action Plan targets. A new guide on traineeship was launched by Minister Bruton at an event in November 2017 along with a new traineeship website.<sup>8</sup>

Career Traineeship is a model of combined on and off the job learning aimed at providing a course of specific skills development for career progression in distinct economic sectors and occupations. It seeks to build on national and international best practice in WBL initiatives for job seekers, with a model of training provision that is employer-led and directly responsive to skills demand in the local and national economy. A critical and distinguishing feature of the model is that applications of it will have a genesis in nationally and locally identified needs, requiring a response involving core modules but with the flexibility to address local employer

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<sup>5</sup> ‘Work-Based Learning in Europe, Practices and Policy Pointers’, European Commission (2013a)

<sup>6</sup> ‘Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners’, European Commission, December (2013b). <http://ec.europa.eu//apprentice-trainee-success-factors>

<sup>7</sup> ‘Further Education and Training Strategy, 2014-2019’ SOLAS, Department of Education and Skills

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.traineeship.ie>

requirements. It is being piloted in a number of regions of the country in a partnership process involving primarily SOLAS, ETBs and local employers.

ICF, together with its partner Fitzpatrick Associates Economic Consultants, was appointed by SOLAS in early 2016 to undertake an evaluation of the Pilot Career Traineeship (CT) Programme it has jointly implemented with a number of Education and Training Boards (ETBs). This report presents the Final Report of the evaluation. SOLAS have informed us that it is their intention that this report, together with their review of pre-2016 traineeships will be considered by the Traineeship Steering Group and inform the strategic development of traineeships in Ireland.

## 1.2 Methodology

The approach and methodology comprised a number of complementary elements:

- a three-phased approach comprising an inception phase followed by two sequential phases examining two sets of pilot CTs operating in 2015/16 and 2016/17 respectively;
- a review of international literature concerning the effectiveness and success determinants of models of WBL and on Traineeships;
- a review of programme documentation, guidance material and research developed by SOLAS;
- visits to eight operational CT programmes, involving detailed interviews with a selection of stakeholders and participants (management and staff of the ETB in question, contracted (classroom-based) training providers, a selection of participating employers, work-place supervisors and trainees); and,
- consultations with a range of national stakeholders, including IHF and Fáilte Ireland.

This qualitative approach allowed the research to capture the perspectives and experiences of all participants, regarding the application of all phases of the CT model in addressing labour market skill needs as well as the needs of ETBs, employers and participating trainees. These were valuable in making informed judgements as to the effectiveness of the model and the formulation of conclusions and recommendations in the areas of both policy and practice.

## 1.3 Evaluation Objectives

The overall purpose of the current review has been to evaluate the Career Traineeship model, as developed and delivered in this pilot phase, in providing an efficient and effective design and delivery model of WBL that meets identified labour market needs and career progression opportunities for learners.

Detailed objectives of the evaluation have been to examine, review and assess:

- The process involved in CT development and delivery, including;
  - model design and development;
  - partnership development;
  - partnership governance, management and administration;
  - stakeholder roles and responsibilities;
  - stakeholder collaboration;
  - employer engagement;
  - employer clustering and co-operation;
  - employer inputs and supports;
  - learner supports, including IT and off-the-job learning;

- Outcomes and achievements including with regard to:
  - trainee placement and career progression
  - partnership/collaboration;
  - occupational skills profiling and sectoral relevance;
  - training needs analysis;
  - programme specification;
  - trainee recruitment and employer-trainee matching;
  - trainee participation;
  - training delivery;
  - workplace supervision and support;
  - learning outcomes;
  - assessment and qualification;
  - employer benefits.
- The future development, transferability and mainstreaming of the CT model as an effective national template for WBL that is responsive to local and national economic needs, including:
  - key determinants of success;
  - stakeholder and partner roles, capacity and responsiveness.

## 2 Work-Based Learning in Context

### 2.1 Policy Context

The European policy environment seeks to support the development of WBL practice. The Europe 2020 strategy puts the quality and relevance of education and training systems at the heart of EU efforts to improve competitiveness and achieve smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. In addition, the Agenda for New Skills for New Jobs<sup>9</sup> suggests that employers should be encouraged to participate in this process by co-investing and participating in WBL. There is however, great variation across Europe in terms of the interpretation of WBL and it is seldom reported on as a distinct entity in strategic policy documents. There is also a call to develop a strong evidence base to monitor and evaluate the implementation of WBL across Europe.

The European Commission (2016) points out that sustained economic growth across the union is dependent on the availability of a skilled and adaptable workforce<sup>10</sup>. The National Skills Strategy DES (2016) recognises that to achieve this it is necessary to meet the skills needs of employers and learners. This involves employers collaborating with education and training providers playing ‘a stronger role in relevant skills development’. The strategy sets out an ambitious target for the provision of 50,000 apprenticeship and traineeship places up to 2020.

This target is set against a strong history of traineeships in Ireland with FÁS Traineeships running since 1995. The traineeship model has been successful in ensuring placement in employment after completion (European Commission 2013<sup>11</sup>).

The European Commission found that there were a number of key success factors of Traineeship Programmes in Ireland including:

- traineeships are designed and delivered in close collaboration with employers;
- combine on-and off-the-job training; and
- ensure labour market relevance as traineeships are ‘occupation-specific’ and ‘industry-endorsed’ (European Commission 2013)<sup>12</sup>.

### 2.2 Career Traineeships

In 2014 the EC published a recommendation, following extensive research across all member states, that a quality framework be applied in the provision of all traineeships. This supported the need to ensure the approach to traineeships in Ireland remained in line with current best practice. The CT model has been specifically developed in the context of findings from desk based research of international literature, fieldwork and extensive consultation with ETBs, employers and employer representative bodies.

The CT model is in line with the European Commission definition of traineeships as involving ‘*work practice (either as part of a study curriculum or not) including an educational/training*

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Agenda for new skills and jobs - A European contribution towards full employment’, European Commission 2010

<sup>10</sup> See for example ‘Proposal for a Council Recommendation on establishing a Skills Guarantee’, at [https://ec.europa.eu/proposal\\_skills\\_guarantee](https://ec.europa.eu/proposal_skills_guarantee)

<sup>11</sup> European Commission (2013b) op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> European Commission (2013b) op. cit.

*component which is limited in time. They allow participants to document practical work experience as part of the individual CV and/or as requested in educational curricula or to gain work practice for the purpose of facilitating the transition from education and training to the labour market. They are predominantly short- to middle-term (a few weeks up to 6 months, in certain cases one year)*<sup>13</sup>.

The CT model alignment with the European Commission recommendations includes<sup>14</sup>:

- a written traineeship agreement;
- specified learning and training objectives;
- clear working conditions;
- clear rights and obligations;
- reasonable duration;
- recognition of traineeships that promote the validation of knowledge, skills and competences; and,
- application of a Quality Framework for Traineeships.

Key Features of the CT model include:

- active employer engagement by ETBs with industry sector or sub-sector involving provision of employer briefing on the CT model to elicit interest in collaboration;
- establishment of suitability of employers for delivery of work-based learning following expression of interest by employers;
- a signed Agreement between ETB and employers setting out roles and responsibilities;
- training of workplace supervisors to support delivery of work-based learning;
- a partnership approach to identifying industry skill needs by ETBs and employers using a specifically-designed and efficient occupational skill profiling process;
- clusters of employers from the same industry sector or sub sector grouping together to offer work-based learning and employment opportunities to trainees;
- collaborative programme development by groups of ETBs based on analysis of occupational skills profiling data;
- use of an IT platform to, support learners, workplace supervisors, tutors and employers through the various stages of a Career Traineeship; and
- provision of training for programme tutors in use of the IT supports.

## 2.3 Work-Based Learning Models

Work-based learning refers to learning which learners engage in when doing work that leads to the production of goods or services for the company in which they are situated. The concept refers specifically to the achievement by learners of planned learning outcomes, to industry standards, by fulfilling their role within a workplace environment. One of the

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<sup>13</sup> European Commission, (2012). 'Towards a Quality Framework on Traineeships - Second-Stage Consultation of the Social Partners at European Level under Article 154' TFEU, SWD(407) final, Brussels, 5.12.2012

<sup>14</sup> EC 2014 Recommendations

significant differences in this approach to skills training is that work-based learning involves conscious reflection by learners on actual experience within a workplace environment.

It is important to note that traineeships and indeed the Career Traineeships are based on a Work Based Learning model. That is to say they involve the 'acquisition of knowledge and skills through carrying out – and reflecting on – tasks in a vocational context, either at the workplace (such as alternance training) or in a VET institution.'<sup>15</sup>

A literature review by the European Training Foundation provides a comprehensive overview of the evidence on the benefits of WBL for learners, employers and wider society. From the evidence reported, key benefits for learners identified include:<sup>16</sup>

- Hard skills, technical expertise and tacit knowledge: Research suggests that technical competencies are seen to be more effectively learnt in the workplace.
- Soft skills, other competences and behaviours: Technical skills are not considered enough for success in the labour market as it is softer skills like communication, teamwork and customer relation skills that are often valued. Typically, these are skills developed away from the workplace and are transversal, allowing movement between employers and sectors. Socialisation, motivation and self-esteem: Work based learning can positively affect a learner's self-esteem and efficacy when they can demonstrate their capacities and problem solve in a work context. It can also give trainees new enthusiasm for learning and self-development.

*'Positively engaging learners in this way creates powerful opportunities to raise the aspirations, confidence and motivation of individuals. Learners who benefit from high quality learning in the workplace can be put in situations that help them develop problem solving abilities and the capacity to adapt to change as they encounter new and different workplace practices, technologies, and environments. Thus, high quality work-based learning can also contribute to innovation.'*<sup>17</sup>

- Smoother school-to-work transitions: This can be seen in positive early employment outcomes with evidence to suggest that involvement in the labour market during WBL provides easier transition to work once WBL is complete.
- Fostering entrepreneurship: Data from the UK suggests that former apprentices between the ages of 25 and 27 are almost three times more likely to set up their own business<sup>18</sup>.
- Impact on wages: This is reported in the case of apprenticeships and shows that in certain contexts WBL can have a positive impact on wages. It should be noted that this is dependent on the prestige of the programme, its competitiveness and level of qualification achieved.
- Career Progression: There is evidence that WBL can be important in enhancing a learner's career progression. It is thought that WBL helps individuals to gain a better understanding of workplace culture and expectations but also to develop good work habits. A US review of research on school-to-work programmes (including WBL) found that students who take part in WBL are better prepared for choosing their future career

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<sup>15</sup> CEDEFOP, Quality in Education and Training. CEDEFOP Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2011

<sup>16</sup>[http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/576199725ED683BBC1257BE8005DCF99/\\$file/Work-based%20learning\\_Literature%20review.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/576199725ED683BBC1257BE8005DCF99/$file/Work-based%20learning_Literature%20review.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/repository/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf)

<sup>18</sup><https://www.allaboutschooleavers.co.uk/news/article/374/apprentices-are-three-times-more-entrepreneurial-than-the-average-young-person>

directions and that working with a mentor was particularly important for career progression.

- Evidence suggests that WBL is particularly useful for vulnerable young people<sup>19</sup> and the unemployed because of its ability to engage learners disengaged by traditional classroom based provision.

Benefits identified for employers include:<sup>20</sup>

- Recruitment impact: WBL has the potential to make employment with a particular company more attractive than it otherwise might be, thereby enabling employers to recruit from a wider pool of applicants.
- Enhanced corporate image: Providing workplace training can also enhance a company's image. This is considered an important motive for companies in Germany, for example, where the Federal Ministry of Education and Research found that 57% of employers believe that participation in enterprise-based training enhances the company's reputation.
- Staff retention and work satisfaction: Trainees are more likely to stay on with the company that they are working with.
- Opportunity to address skills gaps: Skills shortages can have a large number of negative impacts on enterprises, including increased operating costs or reduced innovative practices. Addressing skills gaps can help to mitigate these negative impacts.

Benefits for society include increased employability as a result of the production of relevant skills tailored to employment needs. Importantly these include soft skills and employability skills. Work based learning has also been seen to impact on youth unemployment patterns as well as providing positive results for other vulnerable groups. WBL is seen to increase social integration and inclusion as well as fostering innovation and creativity vital for a successful economy. As the cost of WBL is shared between public funds and enterprises it can be seen as valuable to society because of its high economic return.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/182022/DFE-RR065.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182022/DFE-RR065.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/576199725ED683BBC1257BE8005DCF99/\\$file/Work-based%20learning\\_Literature%20review.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/576199725ED683BBC1257BE8005DCF99/$file/Work-based%20learning_Literature%20review.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/576199725ED683BBC1257BE8005DCF99/\\$file/Work-based%20learning\\_Literature%20review.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/576199725ED683BBC1257BE8005DCF99/$file/Work-based%20learning_Literature%20review.pdf)



## 3 Career Traineeship Model

### 3.1 Model Development

The impetus to explore and develop the CT model arose from the growing recognition of the positive role of WBL in simultaneously addressing employer and learner needs, and recognition in the FET Strategy of the future importance of both apprenticeships and traineeships among appropriate interventions that have WBL at their core. It also arose from a recognition by SOLAS that the existing traineeship model in Ireland differed from what was being highlighted internationally, by for example, the European Commission as the key features of effective traineeships, including with respect to active employer engagements, structured learning in both workplace and classroom settings, and written agreements with employers.

In developing the model SOLAS reviewed both the international literature concerning WBL and traineeship models, as well as the experience of traineeships among other models of WBL as delivered in Ireland. In specifying an appropriate pilot model, there was also cognisance of the reformed FET sector in Ireland, the respective policy, funding, and delivery roles of the Department of Education, SOLAS and the ETBs, and the need for any new or pilot traineeship model to be capable of being adopted and followed in specific sectors and locations, with each application being a genuinely local and bottom-up structure involving real and thorough partnership and collaboration. For these reasons emphasis was put on defining, specifying and testing a model, supporting and facilitating its wider adoption, but at the same time providing supports that facilitate local and organic development of an application of the model, rather than simple copying or duplication of a programme developed elsewhere.

To do this, SOLAS:

- researched international best practice in traineeships and WBL more generally;
- put in place a national “structure” through which to develop the model, oversee its application in pilot form, and aid the development of tools and supports for its successful adoption (comprising the Steering Group, Working Groups and Advisory Group);
- defined the CT “model” as appropriate for Ireland, in terms of the structure of Irish enterprise and that of the FET sector, and identified its core components;
- prepared a suite of tools to support ETBs, employers and practitioners to successfully understand and adopt the model or apply it in a new setting (including process maps, templates, checklists and guidelines); and
- developed training for workplace supervisors - to position them to effectively support trainees during the work-based learning phase - and supported ETB staff to ensure effective engagement with employers to determine the occupational profiles of the role as identified by employers.

### 3.2 Model Overview

The CT model has four core pillars:

#### 1. Needs Identification

This is the process of identifying local sectors and clusters of employers with identifiable training needs that may be addressed by a traineeship model. It should incorporate labour market analysis to identify skills needs through both national and local labour

market research and data, and the use of available information (such as expert reports, relevant regional or local reports, local knowledge, engagement with relevant local stakeholders and participation in relevant local structures (for example, regional skills fora)). An important next feature is the profiling of occupations amongst all employers in the cluster, which involves the clear identification of roles, tasks, activities, and associated core, generic and specialist skills, abilities and competences. The educational and training qualifications necessary to fulfil them, for occupations and job specifications in which the skills shortage has been identified, must then be determined. Aggregate employer occupational skills profiling (OSP) data is analysed by the ETB, and brought to a Collaborative Programme Development group involving all ETBs involved in the development of the national CT.

## **2. Employer Partnership**

Employer partnership is the process through which groups of employers who have employment vacancies and whose specific occupational skill needs are identified, are engaged with, and brought into a local CT process as committed partners. It is the cornerstone of the CT model, and a key factor determining its successful delivery. A single ETB lead contact person should be identified and given responsibility for overall co-ordination and maintenance of the employer relationship, to ensure effective liaison and the appropriate integration of the classroom-based directed learning with the WBL phases.

The model involves an initial engagement, where the ETB identifies a cluster of employers with existing or future skill needs in their sector or sub sector, which can be informed by or cross referenced to available labour market research at national, regional and local levels. After approaching, and initially engaging with, such a set of employers, the ETB will brief employers on what is involved in the development and delivery of this model of training intervention and seek expressions of interest in their participation.

ETBs subsequently determine the suitability of individual employers for ongoing involvement, taking into consideration their business activities, their skill needs, and their understanding of, capacity to implement, and commitment to the programme. A formal agreement is signed by each employer, which seeks to ensure and document that all parties are committed to the design, development and delivery of a quality CT, and to clearly designate roles and responsibilities, and it must be signed by the ETB and employers at an early stage and prior to the recruitment of trainees.

Arising from this process a cluster of employers is formed that will inform the design, development and delivery of CTs.

## **3. Collaborative Programme Development**

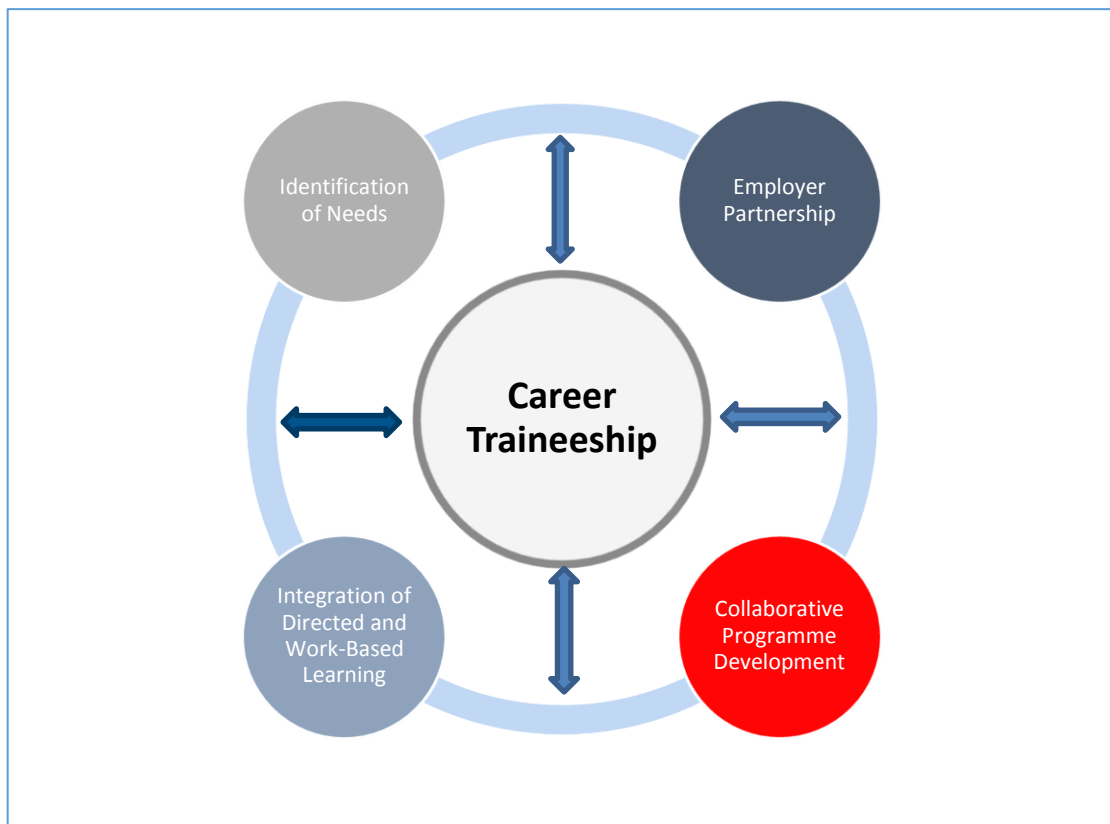
A critical feature is that the model facilitates collaborative development by ETBs, employers and practitioners, of traineeships that address national and local needs. This is achieved through the analysis of OSP data, the establishment of modular outlines comprising core, generic and elective modules for each local ETB's employer requirements, and the collation of modular outlines into one agreed composite programme outline. Further steps require consideration and establishment of external programme accreditation, consideration of programme duration, and documentation of all specifications.

## **4. Integration of Directed and Work-Based Learning**

The fourth pillar consists of the systems, tools and structures developed by SOLAS in collaboration with ETBs to facilitate and support the development of national CTs. These standard agreements, templates, process maps, guidelines, training and online supports

developed are used by ETBs who work collectively to develop the required Career Traineeships.

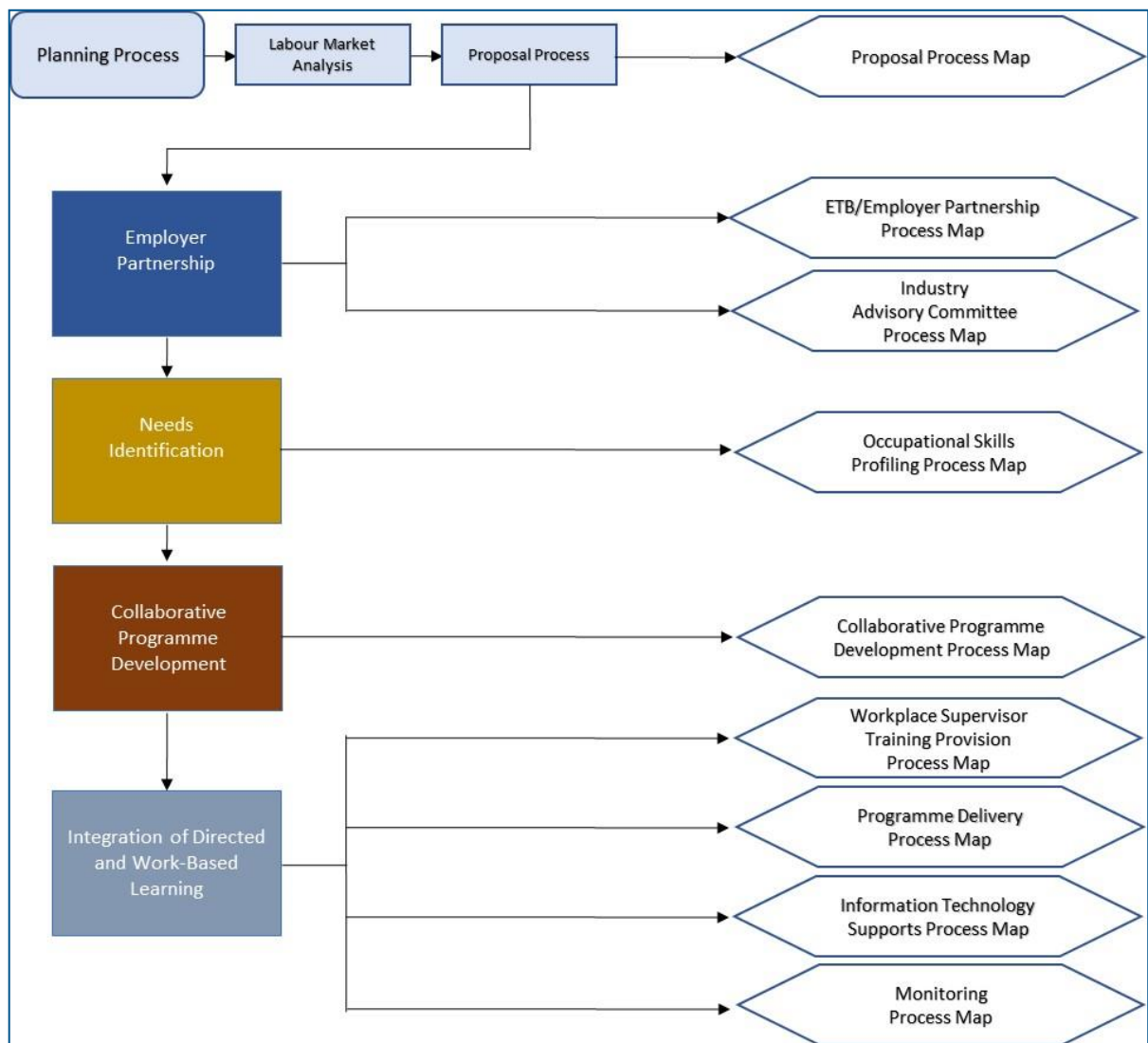
Figure 3.1 CT Model – Core Pillars



### 3.3 Key Elements of the Model

The various components of the CT model and how they inter-relate have been mapped by SOLAS in diagrammatic form as shown in Figure 3.1. Separate and more detailed process maps have also been devised for the key sub-components and processes, including an overall CT process map, Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 CT Process Map



Source: SOLAS

As illustrated above the stages of applying the model include a number of critical steps as shown below in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3 CT Model Stages and Critical Steps

- 1. Proposal Approval**
  - a) Labour market analysis conducted (*ETBs*)
  - b) Need for Career Traineeship established (*ETBs, Employers, National Steering Group (NSG), Employer Representative Bodies*)
  - c) Proposal approved (*SOLAS, ETB*)
- 2. Employer Partnership**
  - a) Suitable employer partners identified (*ETBs*)
  - b) Employer cluster established (*ETBs, Employers, Employer Representative Bodies*)
  - c) Programme agreements signed (*ETBs, Employers*)
  - d) Workplace Supervisors trained (*ETBs, Employers, SOLAS*)
- 3. Needs Identification**
  - a) Occupational Skills Profiling (OSP) training completed (*SOLAS, ETBs*)
  - b) Occupational Skills Profiling (OSP) conducted (*ETBs, Employers*)
  - c) OSP summary data produced (*ETBs*)
- 4. Collaborative Programme Development**
  - a) All ETB OSP summary data collated and analysed (*ETBs*)
  - b) National Career Traineeship (NCT) programme outline and certification approved (*SOLAS, ETBs, Employers*)
  - c) Training programmes created by ETB based on NCT (*ETBs, Employers*)
- 5. Integrated Delivery of Direct Training and Work-based Learning**
  - a) Programme promoted, applicants identified, and trainees selected (*ETBs, Employers, DSP*)
  - b) Delivery approach and resources finalised (*ETBs*)
  - c) IT Training for tutors completed (*SOLAS, ETBs*)
  - d) Career Traineeship commenced (*ETBs*)
  - e) Module assessments and Trainee Learning Plan completed (*Trainees, ETBs, Employers*)
  - f) Monitoring visits and reporting completed (*ETBs, SOLAS*)

The full suite of process maps developed to assist practitioners is included in Annex 1.

### 3.4 Career Traineeships and pre-2016 Traineeship Model

Responsibility for the management of pre-2016 Traineeships involved a central FÁS programme management function that had responsibility for ongoing approval of proposals and development of traineeships with local FÁS management responsible for delivery.

The development of a Career Traineeship model was established as a project by the SOLAS innovation unit based on the outcome of a wide consultation process involving ETBs, state agencies, employers and employer representative bodies and supported by findings from extensive desk research. Management and support for CT pilots is currently being provided by the National Innovation Unit in SOLAS.

The Career Traineeship model has sought to build upon the pre-2016 Traineeship model that predates it. However, some of the key features that distinguish it are as follows:

- The CT model involves provision of guidelines and supports for ETBs to apply in the employer engagement phase, whereas employer engagement under the pre-2016 model was supported through the programme management function in FÁS head office;

- While the pre-2016 model had an employer agreement in place, this was augmented for the CT model to reflect the Quality Framework as recommended by the EU Commission and current best practice in WBL;
- Workplace Supervision is provided for in the CT model, as against workplace mentoring under the pre-2016 model, and WPS training in the CT model is more substantive;
- In terms of skill needs, of the pre-2016 model the programme outline requirements were stated in the traineeship proposal to FÁS programme management, whereas the CT model involves an Occupational Skills Profiling process and training to expedite effectively the detailed skills identification process with employers on which the CT programme is based;
- In the pre-2016 Traineeship all programme development was managed by FÁS head office and approved centrally in line with FÁS programme development procedures and NCDB requirements, whereas the CT collaborative model as supported by SOLAS involves cross ETB collaboration and employer partnership;
- Whereas FÁS had a central programme management function, delivery was the responsibility of local management. CTs are supported and monitored centrally but managed locally by each ETB;
- A desk-based survey conducted by SOLAS in 2015 found that there had been considerable drift away from the pre-2016 Traineeship model with considerable variation in terms of application.

### 3.5 The Effectiveness of Traineeships

There is considerably less literature on the effectiveness of traineeships in comparison to other WBL models such as apprenticeships, however the existing literature suggests some key considerations when evaluating the new CT model.

Key indicators of the effectiveness of the model include:

- whether traineeships are having a significant impact on early school leavers;
- whether traineeships are well targeted at early school leavers;
- the efficiency of traineeships—measured by completion rates;
- the employment outcomes of traineeships; and
- the skills outcomes of traineeships.<sup>22</sup>

Although evidence of the positive employment outcomes of traineeships is less well documented than those of apprenticeships, the OECD estimates, using data from an EU-wide REFLEX survey, that study related work experience increases a graduate's likelihood of finding a job immediately upon graduation by 44%.

In the UK, the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (now the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy) undertook a process evaluation of Traineeships in England<sup>23</sup>. The survey undertaken as part of this evaluation found that, half (50%) of the trainees who had left or completed the traineeship were either on an apprenticeship (22%) or in work (28%). A further 17% were in training or education.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/publications/all-publications/the-effectiveness-of-the-traineeship-model>

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/412623/BIS-15-195-traineeships-first-year-process-evaluation-executive-summary.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/412623/BIS-15-195-traineeships-first-year-process-evaluation-executive-summary.pdf)

Trainees felt they had gained a number of positive benefits from their time on the traineeship: 57% said that the experience they had gained had greatly improved their chances of getting paid work. In addition, trainees felt that the traineeship had made a positive impact on their confidence and readiness for work. For example, 60% felt that it had motivated them a lot to look for work.

Employers and providers had very positive views about the impact of traineeships. Almost all respondents (98% of providers and 97% of employers) agreed that traineeships allow young people to develop new skills that will help them find paid jobs and apprenticeships, while almost as many agreed (84% of providers and 94% of employers) that traineeships are an effective way of increasing young people's chances of finding paid jobs and apprenticeships<sup>24</sup>.

Similarly, in Wales, a traineeship programme called Pathways to Apprenticeship found that the programme's key successes were high levels of completion and attainment, and high levels of satisfaction with the programme amongst learners<sup>25</sup>.

Interestingly a study in Australia flagged up some of the challenges when implementing traineeships:

- 'Traineeships are making an impact on early school leavers, particularly women. We estimate that some 20% of young women who have not completed Year 12 have commenced a traineeship, while for young men it is 7%;
- Completion rates are poor—less than 50%, on average, for 15 to 24-year-old early school leavers;
- Employment outcomes are very good for trainees who are full-time, young, and have not completed school;
- The quality of traineeships is variable, with completers relatively satisfied with their traineeship, but non-completers less so;
- The evidence for increased skill levels is not, on average, convincing'.<sup>26</sup>

### 3.6 Success Factors/Barriers

The variation in the success of traineeships emphasises the importance of an overarching framework to ensure the content and quality of the programme, identify roles and responsibilities, status of the trainee, their terms and conditions, quality assurance mechanisms.

There are examples within Europe that suggest that positive employment outcomes can be associated with certain key success factors:

- there is structured training;
- traineeships provide pathways to higher-level qualifications;
- there are highly skilled off-the-job and workplace trainers;
- assessments are rigorous and relevant;

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<sup>25</sup> <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-pathways-apprenticeship-programme/?lang=en>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/publications/all-publications/the-effectiveness-of-the-traineeship-model>

- the content of training is current, industry-relevant and with a high level of broad transferable skills;
- there is a balance between on-the-job and off-the-job training;
- training is flexible and tailored to trainee and enterprise's needs;
- there is employer support and commitment;
- there is an awareness of roles and responsibilities on the part of education and training providers and employers;
- there are allocated workplace mentors; and
- there are close constructive relationships between training providers and employers and training providers and trainees.

These cohere with the characteristics suggested by the OECD<sup>27</sup> which suggest that there should be mechanisms in place to ensure that the mix of vocational provision available corresponds to the needs of the labour market. Programmes should reflect the market needs and be developed by the labour market actors. They stress the need for flexibility in terms of the modes of study but also in the development of qualifications to meet the local skills needs. The OECD also suggests that effective, accessible, independent, proactive career guidance, backed by solid career information is important in achieving employment outcomes.

The European Commission has also produced guidance on the success factors of WBL. These are set out below:

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/LearningForJobsPointersfor%20PolicyDevelopment.pdf>



Figure 3.4 Key Success factors in WBL as identified by the European Commission<sup>28</sup>

	Key Success Factors	Main Features
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Robust Institutional and Regulatory Framework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A stable and robust institutional and regulatory framework</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Which sets the overarching context and baseline conditions within which schemes are implemented</li> </ul>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Active Social Partner Involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Strong employer engagement</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Constructive dialogue with trade unions and employee representatives</li> </ul>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Strong Employer Involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Including co-design of programmes, supply of quality placements, support to the apprentice/trainee, quality assurance, promoting schemes</li> </ul>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Close Partnerships between Employers and Educational Institutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Two-way interaction and exchange of knowledge between the educational system and employer skills requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensuring the provision of practical training placements of sufficient quantity and quality</li> </ul>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Funding including Employer Subsidies and Other Incentives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The provision of adequate funding for the proper design and rigorous implementation of programmes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sources include EU (including ESF) funds, national/regional funds, employer funds, and subsidies/incentives for employers</li> </ul>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Close Alignment with the Labour Market Needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The alignment of the placement to national, regional or local labour market needs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Which in turn inform the curricula or qualification framework</li> </ul>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Robust Quality Assurance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Robust procedures, administered by an external single body or jointly by the sending organisation and host organisations</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Can cover i.e. learning content, length of training, equity of access and working conditions</li> </ul>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>High-quality Guidance, Support and Mentoring of Apprentices/Trainees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Both at the workplace and at the sending organisation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Critical for the successful completion and reduction of drop-out risks, as well as monitoring and quality assurance</li> </ul>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Appropriate Matching of Apprentice/Trainee to Host Organisation (Company)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Employers can use the work practice period to screen the potential employee</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The apprentice/trainee can obtain a realistic job preview, and enable them to build relevant contacts and networks</li> </ul>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Combination of Theoretical, School-Based Training with Practical Work-Related Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Structured, blended learning, including school-based and on-site workbased learning</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Enabling an apprentice/trainee to achieve qualifications based on practical knowledge and skills</li> </ul>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Existence of an Apprenticeship/Traineeship Agreement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The agreement delineates roles and responsibilities of all parties and specifies apprentice/trainee terms and conditions</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It is generally crucial for the successful achievement of the programme's aims and the protection of the parties involved</li> </ul>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Certification of Acquired Knowledge, Skills and Competences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Accreditation of the knowledge and skills obtained in both the on-the-job and off-the-job phases of training</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The certification should state as a minimum the duration and learning content, tasks and activities undertaken, and the acquired knowledge, skills and competences</li> </ul>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Tailored and Flexible Approaches to the Needs of Vulnerable Young People</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The introduction of innovations to respond to specific needs in terms of pedagogical methods, flexibility of curricula, individualisation of learning pathways, partnerships with key stakeholders, funding mechanisms, and training environments</li> </ul>

Barriers to successful traineeships are commonly as a result of not meeting the success factors described above.

For example, in Wales some of the key barriers for the Pathways to Apprenticeship programme included lack of apprenticeship places post placement, lack of buy in from employers in part because of the fast implementation of the programme. There was variation in the quality of support given to learners and some courses were better suited to the local economy than others.<sup>29</sup> In the European Commission's working document looking at the application of the Quality Framework for Traineeships there were a number of barriers identified including:

- insufficient learning content;
- lack of legislation regarding open market traineeships (apart from Minimum Wage Act);

<sup>28</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/apprentice-trainee-success-factors\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/apprentice-trainee-success-factors_en.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-pathways-apprenticeship-programme/?lang=en>

- lack of transparency on hiring practices;
- possibility of traineeships longer than 6 months; and
- lack of rules on proper recognition of traineeships<sup>30</sup>.

The OECD<sup>31</sup> identified a number of barriers in their report *Skills Beyond School* which, although written before major FET reform and with a broader scope (looking at the whole of FET), should be considered in the evaluation of Career Traineeships. These include:

- 'Apprenticeships are limited to a narrow set of occupations. Workplace training is insufficiently used in many VET programmes;
- Many of those looking after VET students, in particular those in companies, lack pedagogical training;
- Weak literacy and numeracy are serious problems among many learners but problems are often not identified in time or adequately addressed;
- Evaluations and data to assess its efficiency and effectiveness are lacking;
- Data on labour market outcomes are fragmented and research on VET is scarce. The wide range of VET programmes has not been systematically evaluated;
- Career guidance services are fragmented and weakly underpinned by information on labour market opportunities'.

The conclusions from existing research did inform the development of the CT model and consequently serve as the key lines of enquiry in the evaluation of the CT model's effectiveness.

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<sup>30</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1477901513625&uri=CELEX:52016SC0324>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/LearningForJobsPointersfor%20PolicyDevelopment.pdf>

## 4 Career Traineeship Pilots

### 4.1 Overview

The SOLAS Career Traineeship pilot project was initiated to facilitate the development of a range of training programmes to enable people to enter, or re-enter, the world of work, equipped with knowledge, skills and competences that have been identified as being in demand in the labour market. Key to the development of an effective WBL model, such as the Career Traineeship, is the collaboration between industry sectors or sub-sectors comprising networks of employers and ETBs to facilitate knowledge exchange and inform action in relation to programme provision, for the benefit of industry, trainees and the economy.

The Career Traineeship WBL model as currently configured:

- was informed by best practice identified in the literature;
- enhances and aligns current ETB provision with the needs of both employers and learners;
- is founded on a signed agreement between employers and ETBs which specifies the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved;
- engages employers in profiling occupational skill requirement, and subsequently collaborative programme development and delivery;
- is supported by a technology infrastructure to enhance learning;
- is compliant with the EU Quality Framework for Traineeships;
- is enabled by processes and supports that develop the capacity of ETB management and staff for the ongoing management and delivery of work-based learning environments and initiatives; and
- provides a supportive platform for building the WBL capacity of practitioners and learners.

The pilot Career Traineeship project was made possible by the establishment of partnerships with employers, employer representative bodies, ETBs and SOLAS. Communications structures and processes were established to ensure employer involvement in the scoping, design, development and provision of WBL opportunities for learners. Pilot CT programmes were closely monitored throughout the initial implementation and roll-out to inform continuous improvement and development of the model.

However, there were significant challenges that presented themselves to ETBs, SOLAS and employers when engaging in the design, development and delivery of a CT targeted at meeting labour market needs. This was in large part due to the impact of the economic recession as well as the reforms in the FET sector which has taken place over the last number of years.

The FET reforms involved the streamlining of 33 Vocational Education Committees into 16 Education and Training Boards and the transfer of the training function of FÁS into the ETBs with the aim of bringing greater coherence to FET provision locally, regionally and nationally. SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority, was mandated by the Department of Education and Skills to ensure the strategic co-ordination and funding of the sector.

The impact of these reforms included variations in the available range of expertise resident within any one ETB in relation to the provision of WBL programmes such as Apprenticeships and Traineeships. While many ETBs had available expertise due to the transfer of former FÁS management, staff and capital resources, others did not.

This presented both a challenge and opportunity in relation to piloting the CTs. The opportunity that presented itself was whether the CT model would be implemented effectively across all participating CTs regardless of the existing level of available expertise in previously engaging with this model of training intervention. The variation in terms of ETB management and staff expertise would test the efficacies of the structures, process, supports, training and guidelines established for the implementation of the pilots. Then there was the question of whether involvement in the pilots would impact positively with regard to developing the capacity of all involved in the application of this model to address labour market skill needs.

Decisions therefore as to which ETBs participated in the pilots were based solely on the commitment of ETB senior management to engage in the project, allocate management and staffing resources, as well as confirm the identification of labour market skill needs of an industry sector or subsector that required action in their area.

This brings into sharp focus the background and nature of some of the challenges in the piloting of the CT and provides important context for the evaluation.

## 4.2 Industry Sectors and Occupations

Career Traineeships were piloted in industry sectors and occupations where demand for labour and skills had been identified. Hospitality, Engineering and Digital Sales and Marketing were identified as areas with requirements for labour and skills by various Expert Group Future Skills Needs reports.

Four of the CT programmes reviewed are in the hospitality sector, two in the engineering sector, while two have an occupational focus on digital sales and marketing.

## 4.3 Locations

The CT programmes examined were:

- Limerick and Clare ETB (Hospitality) – based in Limerick and Clare;
- Mayo Sligo and Leitrim ETB (Hospitality) – based in Sligo;
- Mayo Sligo and Leitrim ETB (Hospitality) – based in Westport, Co. Mayo;
- Cavan and Monaghan ETB (Hospitality) – based in Cavan;
- Cavan and Monaghan ETB (Engineering) – based in Monaghan;
- Kilkenny and Carlow ETB (Engineering) – based in counties Carlow and Kilkenny;
- Donegal ETB (Digital Sales and Marketing) – based in Donegal;
- Galway and Roscommon ETB (Digital Sales and Marketing) – based in counties Galway and Roscommon.

## 4.4 Training Courses and Qualifications

The courses and qualifications were:

- Limerick and Clare ETB (Hospitality)

- City & Guilds Diploma. NFQ Level 4. 7103/06: Professional Food and Beverage Service;
- Mayo Sligo and Leitrim ETB (Hospitality)
  - QQI Level 5, Hospitality Operations;
- Cavan and Monaghan ETB (Hospitality)
  - QQI Level 5, Hospitality Operations;
- Cavan and Monaghan ETB (Engineering)
  - QQI, Level 5, Engineering Technology;
- Kilkenny and Carlow ETB (Engineering)
  - QQI Level 4, Engineering Skills/Engineering Workshop Processes;
- Donegal ETB (Digital Sales and Marketing)
  - City & Guilds Level 3 Diploma in Digital Marketing;
- Galway and Roscommon ETB (Digital Sales and Marketing)
  - City & Guilds Level 3 Diploma in Digital Marketing.

## 4.5 Strategic Partnerships

During the development and roll out of the Career Traineeships, links were established with agencies and representative bodies which provided support and identified potential companies who were interested in participating. These agencies and representative bodies included the Irish Hotels Federation, Fáilte Ireland, the Vintners Federation of Ireland, the Restaurants Association of Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Screen Training Ireland, Animation Ireland and VFX Association of Ireland, Teagasc, Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association, Small Firms Association and Bord Bia. In addition, a hospitality advisory group for the Hospitality Career Traineeships comprising the Irish Hotels Federation, Fáilte Ireland and SOLAS was set up to support the roll out of the pilots in Hospitality.

## 4.6 Employers and Trainees

Table 4.1 summarises the numbers of employers and trainees involved in each CT programme reviewed as part of the evaluation. Five of the CT pilots in the evaluation were fully operational, while another three were still in the development phase.

Table 4.1 Employer and Trainee Participant Numbers

CT	Employers Initially Involved	Employers taking Trainees for WBL	Trainee Starts
LCETB (Hospitality)	13	8	9
MSLETB (Westport) (Hospitality)	19	9	17
MSLETB (Sligo) (Hospitality)	15	7	12
CMETB (Hospitality)	8	8	16
CMETB (Engineering)	1	1	19
KCETB (Engineering)	21	Employer Engagement Phase	Employer Engagement Phase
DETB (Digital Sales and Marketing)	10	WBL has not begun	16
GRETB (Digital Sales and Marketing)	19	WBL has not begun	16 starts are expected
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>101</b>

## 4.7 Overview of All Career Traineeships

The eight CT programmes that have been reviewed in detail as part of the evaluation are a sub-set of the total of 32 that have been completed, are being delivered or are in development phases. Table 4.2 presents an overview of all CT programmes that are completed or in the delivery phase, as of September 2017.

Table 4.2 Overview of all Career Traineeship programmes completed or at delivery stage (September 2017)

Sector	ETB	Stage	Qualification	Trainees started	Start-finish dates	Employers engaged with ETB	Trainees finished	Trainees in Employment
Hospitality	LOETB	Completed	QQI L5 Restaurant Operations	13	16/11/2015 - 28/06/2016	6	9	11
Hospitality 1 <sup>st</sup> Tranche	MSLETB Mayo	Completed	QQI L5 Hospitality Operations	17	18/01/2016 - 14/10/2016	19	9	10
Hospitality 1 <sup>st</sup> Tranche	MSLETB Sligo	Completed	QQI L5 Hospitality Operations	12	18/01/2016 - 14/10/2016	15	10	9
Hospitality 1 <sup>st</sup> Tranche	LCETB	Completed	C&G Dip. Professional Food & Beverage Service (NFQ L4 equivalent)	9	02/11/2015 - 28/06/2016	14	8	8
Engineering 1 <sup>st</sup> Tranche	CMETB Monaghan	Completed	QQI L5 Engineering Technology	19	21/09/2015 - 28/07/2016	1	15	15
Hospitality 1 <sup>st</sup> Tranche	CMETB Cavan	Completed	QQI L5 Hospitality Operations	16	29/09/2016 - 16/06/2017	8	9	10
Hospitality 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tranche	LCETB	Completed	C&G Dip. Professional Food & Beverage Service (NFQ L4 equivalent)	14	16/01/2017 - 28/07/2017	14	12	12
Hospitality 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tranche	MSLETB Mayo	Completed	QQI L5 Hospitality Operations	12	24/10/2016 - 01/09/2017	9	8	5
Hospitality 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tranche	MSLETB Sligo	Completed	QQI L5 Hospitality Operations	16	07/11/2016 - 24/08/2017	9	9	8
Interior Systems 1 <sup>st</sup> Tranche	GRETB	Completed	C&G NVQ Dip. in Interior Systems (Construction)- (NFQ L4 equivalent)	15	14/11/2016 - 25/09/2017	1	10	10
Engineering 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tranche	CMETB Monaghan	Completed	QQI L5 Engineering Technology	21	12/09/2016 - 2/06/2017	1	18	17
Interior Systems 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tranche	GRETB	Delivery	C&G NVQ Dip. in Interior Systems (Construction) (NFQ L4 equivalent)	20	3/04/2017 - 16/02/2018	1	In progress	In progress
Hospitality	LMETB	Delivery	C&G Diploma Professional Food and Beverage Service (NFQ L4 equivalent)	17	13/03/2017 - 6/10/2017	10	In progress	In progress
Digital Sales & Marketing	DETB	Delivery	C&G Dip. – Digital Marketing (NFQ L5 equivalent)	16	29/05/2017 - 13/04/2018	10	In progress	In progress
Laboratory Assistant	CMETB Monaghan	Delivery	QQI L5 Laboratory Techniques	14	11/09/2017 – 15/06/2018	1	In progress	In progress

Developing Best Practice in Work-Based Learning - An Evaluation of the Career Traineeship Pilot

Sector	ETB	Stage	Qualification	Trainees started	Start-finish dates	Employers engaged with ETB	Trainees finished	Trainees in Employment
Engineering 3 <sup>rd</sup> Tranche	CMETB Monaghan	Delivery	QQI L5 Engineering Technology	18	11/09/2017 - 1/06/2018	1	In progress	In progress
Hospitality 3 <sup>rd</sup> Tranche	LCETB	Delivery	C&G Dip. Professional Food & Beverage Service (NFQ L4 equivalent)	13	18/09/2017 - 30/03/2018	15	In progress	In progress
Digital Sales & Marketing	GRETB	Delivery	C&G Dip. Digital Marketing (NFQ L5 equivalent)	16 <sup>32</sup>	18/09/2017 - 3/08/2018	19	In progress	In progress

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<sup>32</sup> Expected starts



Table 4.3 sets out details of further CTs that are in development at the time of writing (September 2017).

**Table 4.3 Overview of Career Traineeship programmes in development (September 2017)**

Sector	ETB	Stage
Engineering	WWETB	Collaborative Programme Development
Engineering	LMETB	Recruitment of Trainees
Engineering	KCETB	Recruitment of Trainees
Hospitality	KCETB	Recruitment of Trainees
Engineering	DETB	Collaborative Programme Development
Engineering	LWETB	Employer Partnership
Hospitality	DETB	Needs Identification
Visual FX	CDETB	Programme Development
Animation	KCETB	Recruitment of Trainees
Hospitality	KETB	Recruitment of Trainees
Hospitality	KWETB	Recruitment of Trainees
Hospitality 3rd Tranche	MSLETB Mayo	Recruitment of Trainees
Hospitality 3rd Tranche	MSLETB Sligo	Recruitment of Trainees
Hospitality 2nd Tranche	CMETB Cavan	Recruitment

The total number of CT programmes that have been completed or are in the delivery or development stages is 32. Grouped by sector and ETB there are:

- Sector: 17 in hospitality, 8 in engineering, 2 in digital sales and marketing, 2 in interior systems, and 1 each in animation, visual effects, and laboratory assistance; and
- ETB: 6 in both Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB and Cavan and Monaghan ETB, 3 in each of Kilkenny and Carlow ETB, Limerick and Clare ETB, Donegal ETB and Galway and Roscommon ETB, 2 in Louth and Meath ETB, and 1 in each of Waterford and Wexford ETB, Laois and Offaly ETB, Kerry ETB, Longford and Westmeath ETB, Kildare and Wicklow ETB, and City of Dublin ETB.

In total there are 13 ETBs that have completed CTs or are in the delivery or development stages. The remaining ETBs include Cork ETB, Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB, and Tipperary ETB, who have participated/are participating in working groups for Hospitality, Engineering and Digital Sales & Marketing where relevant. One of these is at early proposal phase.

## 5 Evaluation Findings – Critical Steps in Model Development and Delivery

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out evaluation findings based on the eight active CT programmes reviewed. It is structured according to the five critical phases of CT programme planning, development and delivery, with the final section summarising findings regarding overall achievements and impacts to date.

Each of the following sections presents findings on the challenges experienced by the local stakeholders in practice, and their experiences regarding the effectiveness and value gained from each phase. Some findings are similar across different phases, reflecting the interconnectivity of elements and the presence in more than one phase. The sections also incorporate text boxes which provide illustrations of local processes, challenges and solutions from the CT programmes reviewed.

A general finding has been that ETBs entered into the process of engaging with SOLAS, testing the CT concept, and investing in its development and delivery in a pilot process, based on:

- a shared and strategic perspective on the importance of employer outreach and engagement;
- a need to develop clear economic relevance in their programme delivery;
- strategic awareness of skills development needs and its impact on businesses and sectors;
- existing and emerging skills and FET policy; and
- their own need to enhance capacity and capability for effective employer partnership.

While pre-existing exposure to work-based learning models, programme design principles, and effective employer engagement all varied, all ETBs generally shared a common perspective on their relevance, strategic importance, and potential value in supporting organisational goals, with that perspective typically held both at managerial and operational levels.

### 5.2 CT Proposal Phase

When the model and pilot CTs were first being developed, there were varying levels of prior experience and understanding of WBL models of training delivery within ETBs. This influenced the supports required and the necessary management structures to support ETBs and employers in developing suitable CT responses to identified labour market needs. The ETBs concluded that a two-stage proposal phase was necessary, the first involving labour market analysis and the second involving the preparation of a formal proposal.

Whether the ETB or relevant personnel had experience in developing traineeships or programmes of WBL was also a relevant factor in the development and delivery of appropriate support, as was the level of interaction between the ETB and the SOLAS Innovation Unit. Other factors that informed the initiation of the CTs reviewed included:

- whether the ETB was delivering any related sectoral programmes or courses that involved elements of WBL or work placement, and whether there were existing relationships with employers in a particular sector;
- local knowledge of key ETB personnel, and their professional relationships with industry, businesses and commercial and non-commercial groupings;

*In one company the Chief Executive was committed from the first stages and fundamental in the programme's conception. As well as being actively involved in aspects of programme design and specification, the CEO was critical to ensuring the company's commitment was maintained by all its representatives and managers. This is considered by interviewees as a very important contextual role, as initially line managers and production supervisors were concerned that having trainees in the company for an extended period, and the need to supervise them, may reduce efficiency, and were wary of the up-front time and investment necessary both at design and delivery phases before the benefits of having access to more skilled staff could be realised. All stakeholders pointed to the key role of the most senior company executives in ensuring the firm as a whole remained committed and perseverant in the lengthy periods before the benefits were apparent.*

- individual or clusters of local employers already being vocal about skills gaps and recruitment challenges;
- the existence of strong links to industry and an innovative ethos with regard to training provision;

*One CT was developed in close collaboration with an existing industry training centre with very strong links to industry and local employers. The centre had previous experience of placing individuals on short-term work experience with employers but not in the more structured context provided by a CT. This included existing relations with most of the employers who became active in the CT. Employers all had recent or longer-term experience of work-based training, including internal training and experience of provision of placements to students from colleges. Again, the more structured formal approach to training provided by the CT was new, and the ETB successfully planned and then implemented the CT programme building on existing facilities, industry knowledge, and service provision in the region.*

- strong local links with local or national sectoral bodies or representative groupings, providing a communications channel regarding staffing problems, challenges and solutions being pursued elsewhere;
- uniquely strong links and relationships between senior ETB personnel and senior executives in a single large company with substantial skills development needs;
- interaction between the ETB and a sectorally-focused state agency (Teagasc) with established industry links. In one case Teagasc had strong relationships with small craft and artisan food producers, particularly so in the county in question, and was aware of the companies need for greater skills in the area of digital sales and marketing, which it brought to the attention of the ETB;
- in more recently established CTs, initiation was prompted in part in response to a needs analysis undertaken by the relevant regional skills forum;
- direct approaches to the ETBs from individual but significant employers;

- interaction between employers and authorised apprenticeship officers in the ETBs, with the latter providing both a list of sectoral employers as well as knowledge of their likely demand for skills and suitability for a CT.

### 5.3 Employer Partnership

An effective employer partnership was widely understood as a critical dimension of the CT concept and ongoing determinant of its effective delivery by ETBs, and their experiences helped to crystallise the common features of an effective partnership process.

Effective features identified included:

- the partnerships' ongoing engagement throughout all phases of development and delivery;
- the need for an individual to lead employer relationships;
- the need for continuous communication and liaison with employers;
- strong briefing for all partners;
- establishing requisite buy-in and commitment;
- the joint identification of skills needs; and
- collaborative CT design and delivery thereafter.

The processes in practice also identified a number of challenges in establishing and maintaining partnerships, including those with contracted training providers. These included:

- recognition that establishing effective employer partnerships is resource intensive, requiring work across what might involve a significant number of employers and throughout all the phases of the CT design and delivery;

*Some of the CTs that utilised contract training providers had challenges at the point of procurement, mainly due to preferred bidders withdrawing their interest having underestimated the work involved in a new model of training. However, both the ETBs and other training providers realised that a learning curve was involved and that the work on an initial CT would not require repetition for later rounds of delivery. ETBs and contracted trainers shared the investment in initial programme development and the first round of delivery, both reporting that outcomes for employers and trainees had subsequently validated their efforts, and the programme now had less onerous challenges in further iterations.*

- in what may be employers' first exposure to the ETB or to the concept of a traineeship or WBL itself, employers may be uninformed, wary or risk-averse, and difficult to persuade or keep committed even where they are known to be appropriate participants with relevant skills gaps;
- where CTs are skill-based rather than sector-specific, the ETB co-ordinator, tutor or contracted trainer may know less about each individual firms' business or market context, and have less time or ability to learn about it given the scope of businesses and sectors involved, this can work against the depth of the ETB/employer engagement;

- interest and enthusiasm can wane if CTs take significant time to bring to the delivery phase, and in their first attempts to do so ETBs may underestimate the elapsed time involved;

*An ETB staff member involved in the early identification of employers described their experience as having had to be assertive and confident with employers, needing to sell the course and its benefits to them, and persuading them of its quality and relevance, about which the ETB staff were already convinced.*

A number of issues and challenges were reported as being of additional relevance for small companies. These included that:

- small companies may by definition be more challenging than large firms, principally as they have less time, people and resources to attend to the CT or the ETB. In such cases the commitment and enthusiasm of the employer may not be in question, but their ability to back up that commitment with activity and engagement may be severely constrained. This can have significant implications for the efforts needed on the part of the ETB to support the process;
- a related issue is where the CT is occupationally or skill-set defined rather than sectorally-defined. Employers interested in principle in a CT that may address a specific skill requirement they have, may not be in a position to engage as much as others. This is particularly the case where it is a small or micro-business with no HR manager or staff explicitly responsible for training, and/or it is being engaged on a cross-sectoral CT where it has nothing or very little in common with other employers participating in the CT;
- as well as insufficient managerial time, the capacity constraints of small companies can extend to not having sufficient space or IT infrastructure to be able to physically accommodate a trainee during the WBL phases (this has given rise to a “hub” concept of accommodation for digital sales and marketing trainees on one CT);
- small companies involved in skill-specific CTs may not have the same scope as larger firms engaged in sectoral CTs to take on trainees as full-time staff when the CT is complete, and in these cases they may instead need the specialist input provided on a part-time or contracted basis. CTs have attempted to respond to this, by introducing modules on self-employment and starting a business.

Some issues and challenges related specifically to the WBL elements of the CT. These included:

- WPS training is often a barrier for employers, as the smallest firms find it difficult to release key personnel for the time required. Often this may be more a perception on the part of the employer, as they have yet to see the benefits of the training and the CT itself, however such perceptions can hamper effective engagement and impact negatively on supervision that takes place at delivery phases;

Other issues related to trainee selection:

- trainee selection and allocation across the employers in the CT is also a process that needs careful management to ensure employers remain engaged and enthusiastic. The role of employers in identifying, promoting, screening or interviewing trainees for participation in the CT to begin with, and then any

subsequent role in selecting or approving trainees allocated to them as hosts for WBL, both need prior clarity and careful management on the part of the course co-ordinators to ensure employer buy-in and commitment remains strong.

*In one case a key achievement reported was that trainees remained committed after beginning. This was partly attributed to good interviewing which in this CT was a joint interview with a training centre and the prospective employer. Choosing people who are actually interested in going into the sector was seen as important. Employers emphasised the need for trainees to want to work in the industry in question. All employees who completed the CT and wished to have employment got jobs, and in the majority of cases this was in the company in which they had gained their experience.*

Some respondents identified issues around administration:

- there is an amount of unavoidable paperwork and administration for employers and ETBs to complete, which has been minimised to the degree possible while ensuring necessary safeguards are in place, particularly regarding employer responsibilities and commitments. Complying with these requirements has in cases been found to be challenging and have dampened enthusiasm;
- while having employers sign the programme agreement is mandatory, ensuring they do so and then enforce its provisions, can become difficult for ETB coordinators, not just due to their resource constraints but also as they do not want the risk of affecting relationships with important employers to jeopardise trainee options or the programme more generally.

Overall employer engagement has worked well across the CTs reviewed, and the efforts invested have been instrumental to the pilots achieving what they have. The work, knowledge, approach taken and perseverance shown by ETBs supported by SOLAS and also contracted trainers is probably the main reason for this. The commitment, effort and investment of time and resources of employers themselves must too be acknowledged, and in some cases has been immense.

Specific aspects of the processes and approaches followed in the pilot CT programmes that have worked well or contributed strongly to successful employer-ETB partnerships include the following:

- careful consideration by and close liaison between an ETB and a contracted trainer to identify and select employers to approach;
- well-planned and delivered briefing events by the ETBs and supported by SOLAS, and promotional activities for employers as well as targeted formal correspondence, followed up proactively with individual employers by the ETB;

*In one ETB a further education college had existing relationships with employers with a track record of taking on PLC students for work placements. In developing the CT, these relationships were actively leveraged. The PLC tutors most acquainted with employers took the lead in engaging with their contacts to adopt the CT model.*

- strong pre-existing local relationships and ongoing communication allowing company skills problems and concerns to routinely become known to the ETB;
- acute knowledge of, respect for, and relationships with individual employers, particularly those of significant scale in a local setting;

- as a means of identifying individual employers and groups, linking into existing local sectoral groupings (or local or regional branches of national sectoral representative groups), and the ability of such groups to be approached, consulted or engaged with;
- the commitment of the employer from the outset, and their top-to-bottom commitment across different levels within the business, despite the fact that trainee supervision and teaching is costly and disruptive on the factory floor prior to it generating any business benefits;

*The commitment, skills and job-readiness of trainees on completion was remarked upon by employers, and a number further commented on the cost saving this represented, the lack of any learning curve, their immediate productivity and the fact that the core competences are already in place prior to employment.*

- in a number of cases employers have extended their involvement into the area of classroom-based teaching and tutoring, where alternative tutors have been difficult to find or where relevant individuals have such an interest and are given the time by the employers (for example, in off-peak periods for the hospitality sector). Where this has happened, it has been not only an extension of the employer's commitment to the CT, but has also strengthened the relationship between the employer and ETB, the employer and other classroom tutors, and the employer and the trainees, and has added to the sense of genuine partnership the CT conveys to existing and prospective trainees;
- proactive classroom tutors, whether contracted trainers or in-house ETB teachers and trainers, have sought to directly interact with individual employers, so as to understand first hand their needs, reasons for involvement, and objectives for the CT first hand. The objectives are to align the classroom learning most ideally to the WBL that each employer may be providing at different points in time, to tailor classroom-based project work as closely as possible to the real project work each host employer is involving trainees with, and in all of these ways to make the relationship between classroom-based and work-based learning dovetail to the greatest extent possible for the benefit of the trainees and the employers;
- the decision of some employers to provide moderate financial recompense to trainees has been seen as evidence of their commitment to the CT as well as to attracting (and retaining) appropriate trainees (although whether and how these are offered haven't been consistent across all employers or in all pilot CT programmes, a point returned to in the recommendations).

## 5.4 Needs Identification

The OSP process is detailed, and seeks to establish:

- programme learning outcomes, i.e. the knowledge, skills and competence that a trainee will have attained on successful completion of the programme;
- modular outlines;
- module learning outcomes;
- unit learning outcomes, i.e. tasks, knowledge, skill and competence requirements for individual units within modules; and

- the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) level to which the Career Traineeship programme will be targeted.

The systematic and detailed process of occupational skills profiling and outline programme specification involved in this phase was for many ETBs and employers their first exposure to such a process. As such, significant assistance was required and provided. While our review identified a recurrent issue of the time and effort the needs assessment work involved, in many cases any frustration was often due to having underestimated the level of investment at the outset, rather than any view that the work had proven to have been overly-complicated come the delivery stage.

The OSP process seems to have worked effectively in the pilot CTs reviewed. While there was variation as to the specific aspects that featured, the perspectives of those involved, and the challenges that arose in each case, the identification, recognition, awareness and analysis of needs featured explicitly in the conception and development of all CTs reviewed.

All CT programmes were developed following OSP processes undertaken with employers, and the feedback on the process is universally strong in that regard. From the perspective of ETBs, the merit of the process revolves around:

- its intricate and detailed examination of employer requirements, to which the ETB can then respond. As such it provides an extremely useful means by which ETBs can be relevant and responsive to local economic needs and to businesses and companies;
- its provision of a systematic and detailed tool for diagnosing specific skill requirements and prospective appropriate responses;
- its value in helping ETBs to be progressive and innovative, thereby strengthening their credibility with and benefit to employers;
- the learning it generates for ETB personnel as regards skill needs assessment, employers' knowledge of skill needs, the relationships between skills, competences, learning outcomes and learning content and programme design.

*One ETB described going out to visit the companies as 'invaluable', allowing them to 'identify real output that was relevant to business'. The process allowed them to 'find out what employers actually need which may be different from what the company or we (the ETB) think at the outset'. The visits confirmed the initial idea that there was a real need for the CT and helped identify the appropriate qualification and most relevant course modules.*

Some of the ETB experiences with OSP of note include:

- the time and work involved in undertaking the process correctly;
- the need to bring in subject-matter expertise to assist the process, where ETB personnel themselves lack sufficient sectoral knowledge or expertise;
- where the CT focused on a skill/occupation rather than a sector, the skill needed to identify which competencies and skills that would be most relevant to all participating businesses;
- responding to the variation in employers' priorities was sometimes surprising to the ETBs;
- balancing the need for detailed needs analysis with employers, with their limited time and scope to engage (especially small employers). The ETBs reviewed



continue to learn how to minimise the time burden on employers, but while still ensuring the necessary engagement takes place.

Feedback from employers has also been positive regarding the OSP process, with many expressing their willingness to “open up” to the ETB staff for this purpose, several commending the discipline it brought to considering needs in details and quite systematically, and others expressing that it creates confidence about the programme design and delivery phase, and overall promise of the CT.

## 5.5 Collaborative Programme Development

Following the needs analysis, the process of collaboratively developing programmes as experienced in the pilots established numerous steps and processes that would be involved for any CT, including analysing OSP data from across all employers, considering and identifying accreditation options, establishing appropriate programme durations, identifying work-based competences and documenting an overall specification.

Most CTs reviewed had completed the programme development phase (whether delivery had begun or not) when they engaged with the evaluators. Some specific feedback included:

- the fact that the work under this process was fully collaborative was welcomed. That in practice it had involved co-operative input from employers, the ETB, the training providers and SOLAS was widely seen as fundamental to its success;
- the need for dedication and perseverance as the work was time-intensive yet some distance from yielding operational benefits and gains for employers;
- sectoral expertise was important, whether coming from employers, from contracted trainers, and/or from the ETBs;
- the support of ETB personnel from a different ETB that was also planning or delivering a similar CT was particularly beneficial;
- the need to keep modules and specifications open to potential future change;
- similarly, the identification and agreement around accreditation processes for City & Guilds modules can be time consuming, and involve much interaction with that body;
- disagreements among employers can arise reflecting their different specific needs, particularly around elective modules;
- some ETBs, particularly smaller ones, felt the programme development process is extremely challenging for ETBs to undertake and perhaps had been over-delegated to them. The benefit of what was the central Curriculum Development Unit in FÁS was recalled in this context;
- employers vary in the importance they attach to the development of a national programme, as well as to its accreditation; and
- specific challenges were mentioned in finding a match between modular learning outcomes and QQI specifications (leading to a need to seek potential accreditation elsewhere).

Feedback in general suggests that all found the collaborative programme development phase highly important and effectively delivered. The process facilitated peer learning, where ETBs were able to share knowledge and best

practice; for example, in quality assurance and using subject matter expertise. However, the process involved intense work and brought distinct challenges.

*One ETB official involved in conducting the OSP and identifying the appropriate qualification and training modules referred to working with other ETBs as having been invaluable, allowing the sharing of tasks and the ability to compare experiences non judgementally and learn from others.*

For those having run a first or second cycle of a CT, there is recognition that while the first round was much more intensive and time consuming than anticipated, the success of the later CTs were as a consequence of the work invested in that initial process.

## 5.6 Integrated Delivery of Direct Training and Work-based Learning

The CT model then involves an integrated delivery phase, which includes:

- finalisation of programme documentation;
- WPS appointment, training and inception;
- tutor identification, procurement (if necessary) and appointment;
- programme promotion to prospective participants, and trainee recruitment (including engagement with DSP as required);
- trainee induction and briefing, including provision of trainee guides, learning plans and agreements;
- set up of CT Moodle page for trainees and briefing;
- engagement between off the job tutor(s) and WPSs;
- access to CT Moodle page for WPSs and briefing;
- selection of a host company for each trainee;
- tutor delivery of off the job phases;
- ETB support to trainees and WPSs during work-based learning phases;
- ETB tutor delivers programme according to the procedures and quality assurance requirements established; and
- ETB conducts monitoring visits and provides SOLAS with feedback.

Some of the key challenges that have arisen in the delivery phase in the CT programmes reviewed related to challenges in ensuring appropriate staff and resources were available. Challenges included:

- underestimation by some employers of the work-based learning trainee supervision and management task;
- a need to have WPS, or those effectively providing supervision and trainee-facing work-based learning, fully informed of what is involved, and enabled to fill that role alongside their normal responsibilities;
- challenges in identifying appropriate classroom tutors for all the modules required;

*In one case an appropriate provider of classroom-based modules in very specific areas could not be identified. An employer suggested their own workplace supervisor was highly capable in this area (although they lacked teaching experience). In this case the ETB actively tutored and supported the supervisor in developing his ability to teach the group in a classroom setting, while the employer was sufficiently committed to cover the costs of the supervisor's time while teaching in the classroom, and an innovative solution was found that facilitated high quality delivery of that classroom module, while also emphasising the collaborative approach between ETB and employer, and for the benefit of trainees.*

- challenges in the WPS role for very small employers and those that lack experience in the occupational area (for example, small companies that require digital marketing capabilities but don't have prior experience in this activity);
- equipping classrooms with appropriate training equipment required for the course modules in question;
- the ability of ETBs to specify the de-facto role of contracted training providers clearly and comprehensively when seeking to procure them, and some subsequent problems with the latter's under-scoping of their proposals. In a number of cases the preferred bidders later pulled out;
- delays in the process of procuring contracted trainers due to changes in procurement procedures and processes.

Some challenges related to timetabling issues and issues of consistency:

- balancing the timetabling of trainee assessments throughout the programme duration, and avoiding their concentration in a small number of periods;
- challenges regarding the timetabling of classroom teaching elements with the preferences of employers, for example, in hospitality traineeships the rostering of hotels differs in each case although classroom modules take place in the same order for all trainees;
- ensuring consistency across different employers regarding their training, supervision and communication responsibilities to trainees, and respecting and acknowledging trainees' status as trainees quite explicitly;
- mixed success with Moodle as an online support to tutors and trainees (although some of the teething problems are recognised as being overcome).

There were also challenges identified with the selection of trainees:

- a preference among some employers to place existing employees (whether part time and/or in receipt of social welfare payments), rather than individuals unknown to them on the CT. The model has again adapted to allow a proportion of employed staff to participate as trainees in the CT;

*In one pilot CT the start-up of the programme was delayed by difficulties in the recruitment of trainees. An initial expectation that employers would be able to nominate participants to attend was not fulfilled. The ETB then engaged with the local DSP office to identify and refer registered unemployed persons to attend the programme, assisted by the DSP's national manager for the industry sector. For the second intake to the CT, the ETB also hosted an 'introductory open-day/ briefing event' that facilitated one-to-one discussion between trainers and potential participants to assess their motivation and interests in working in*

*the sector in advance of the second CT which appears to have been effective.*

- challenges that arise regarding geography and access to transport, specifically the ability of trainees to travel to either classroom learning venues or employers' premises, especially when shift work may be involved in the on-the-job training;
- inconsistency around the provision by employers of financial support to trainees while undertaking WBL.

Despite the challenges identified, where CTs have reached or completed the delivery phase, it has nevertheless been effective according to the CTs reviewed, and indeed is in many cases considered by stakeholders to work well due to a culmination of the intense planning and development work that has taken place prior to it.

Aspects that stakeholders feel most positively about include the following:

- successful promotion of the programme when both ETBs and employers take a role and are actively identifying prospective trainee participants;
- a combination of promotion methods has proven effective (for example, through social media, radio, local events, information meetings, leaflets and flyers, local employment offices, etc.);
- where it has been properly engaged with, WPS training is considered appropriate and the content relevant and very helpful for supervisors and employers;
- having employers closely involved in trainee selection alongside the ETB and perhaps the classroom tutor is important, however how this is done needs to be carefully considered in each recruitment process (for example, which employers to have involved, how decisions are arrived at etc.);
- engagement between the ETB, employers (especially WPSs), the classroom tutor(s) and trainees themselves during the delivery phase is very beneficial, and those CTs where this is dynamic, mutually supportive, and both formal and informal, provide the strongest feedback about the success of the delivery phase;
- effective trainee induction processes and in most cases good communication and feedback channelled to trainees;
- high quality classroom teaching and work-based demonstration, supervision and learning;
- close and careful management of trainees also appears to have featured, with tutors, WPSs and other work-based colleagues jointly monitoring progress and supporting trainees individually where required;

*Feedback from the trainers and employers indicated that participants needed significant development in personal effectiveness and communication skills during the CT. Many of the trainees had low levels of confidence at the outset and some have very little prior work experience. Building trust relationships between trainers and trainees was also an important part of the process and helped raise trainees' capacity to network and approach potential employers. Networking within the trainee group which developed over the duration of the programme led to peer referrals helping trainees get jobs after the CT finished.*

- effective assessment processes;
- the mutuality of the classroom and work-based learning is perhaps greatest where the classroom tutors familiarise themselves fully with the employers, their needs and the actual work setting in which each trainee is placed. Also, when the employers and WPSs familiarise themselves with the classroom-based modules, course content and project work. Trainees are felt to benefit strongly where instructors and tutors understand both learning contexts;
- there is evidence of innovation, flexibility and problem solving by and between the local delivery personnel whether from the ETB, contracted training providers, ETB tutors or employers. Examples include:
  - identifying a need for a specialist short course in ICT for trainees and resourcing and organising one at short notice;
  - facilitating WPSs to deliver classroom based modules where alternative tutors could not be found;
  - fitting out mock workplace settings and equipping classrooms with appropriate machinery in the absence of a dedicated budget to do so; and
  - providing trainees with scope to participate in short overseas visits with relevant learning opportunities (utilising separate funding lines);
- strong candidates are emerging and being appointed as contracted training providers to deliver and manage many aspects of the programme.

## 5.7 Overall Outcomes and Achievements

For the CT programmes reviewed, the following table summarises the outcomes as reported to SOLAS at end-September 2017 in terms of trainee throughput, completion and progression.

Table 5.1 Reported Trainee Outcomes for CT programmes reviewed

Sector	ETB	Started	Completed	Accredited <sup>33</sup>	Status Thereafter			
					Gained Employment			Other
					With CT Employer	Elsewhere in Sector	Other Sector	
Engineering 1 <sup>st</sup> Tranche	CMETB	19	15	15	8	7		4
Hospitality 1st Tranche	CMETB	16	9	9	8	1		7
Hospitality 1st Tranche	LCETB	9	8	8	5		3	1
Hospitality 1st Tranche	MSLETB Westport	17	9	9	7	2		8
Hospitality 1st Tranche	MSLETB Sligo	12	10	10	8		1	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>73</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>23</b>

The outcomes for 51 trainees that have completed programmes suggest:

- a high overall completion and qualification rates (70%); and
- high levels of employment for trainees since completing the programmes (98% of those that completed). Of the 98%:
  - 72% were with employers that had hosted the trainees; and
  - 28% were with other employers, either within the same sector or in another sector.

*A manager described how one trainee had changed over the course of the CT, having been shy and introverted at the beginning, but becoming engaged, open and energised as the course progressed. His skills improved, as did his interpersonal communication. He has been given employment in the firm, which has completed his own transformation.*

*A service manager also described a different trainee as having become very different following the course. Initially the trainee was seen as having ability but also a poor attitude, but that the course made a difference to her whole life course, having since progressed to third level education while working part-time at the host company.*

Of the 73 trainees who commenced on the programmes, SOLAS report that 23 trainees did not complete the programmes for the following diverse reasons:

<sup>33</sup> Actual receipt of awards has not been confirmed.

Table 5.2 Reasons for Trainee non completion

Reason	Number of trainees	Reason	Number of trainees
Further studies	3	Travel difficulties	1
Employment	3	Disciplinary reasons	3
Job seeking	2	Health reasons	2
Maternity Leave	3	Personal reasons	3
Emigration	1	Unstated	2
Total = 23			

While the overall completion rate on programmes in the first tranche was relatively high, it improved in the second tranche for three out of four programmes; this was attributed most likely to more effective recruitment processes.

The reported outcomes are comparable to total outcomes as reported to us by SOLAS, for the eleven completed programmes (including those reviewed as per Table 5.1), as of September 2017. These are outlined as follows:

- 164 trainees took part in the programmes;
- Of the 164 trainees who commenced, 117 trainees completed training;
- Of the 117 trainees who completed training, 110 (94%) were employed after the programme finished. 3 out of 7 trainees went onto further or higher education.

Other impacts and benefits (beyond the direct outcomes for trainees) have also been reported by ETBs, employers, trainers and trainees, particularly arising from the CTs reviewed that had completed a first throughput of learners (or had almost completed one). Positive results include:

- development of good relationships and mutual trust between trainees, supervisors and tutors;
- trainees' experiencing different occupations and tasks and hence becoming aware of personal capabilities, preferences and partialities;
- trainees' gaining exposure to progression paths and enhancing the scope to progress along them (although it is too early to observe significant career progression);
- enhancing of trainee's *local* employment prospects where otherwise perceived as poor or non-existent;
- supporting progression elsewhere (for example, within the sector, in a related sector, or in a subsequent education or training endeavour);
- delivering high-quality training through outsourced provision;
- clearly demonstrating the benefits and advantages of WBL approaches;

- providing a platform to apply systematic and professional approaches to employer engagement;
- stimulating the formation of, collaboration and joint activity in employer networks and fora;
- demonstrating the beneficial services and supports available from ETBs;
- stimulating peer learning and the networking of sectoral expertise across ETBs;
- developing mutually supportive relationships between ETBs and other state agencies with a role in vocational training;
- growing evidence of mutual support, cross fertilisation, and learning efficiency through ETBs working together and exchanging experience;
  
- increasing and demonstrating an internal capacity within ETBs for innovation, employer engagement, economic relevance and the generation of positive local labour market outcomes.



## 6 Conclusions and Recommendations

### 6.1 Evaluation Conclusions

The assessment from the evaluation of the pilots, is that the CT model of training programme delivery has proven both effective and efficient in the design, development and delivery of training targeted at identified labour market skills needs. The model, as developed in partnership with SOLAS, ETBs, employer representative bodies and employers, is reflective of current best practice and has contributed in developing the capacity of all key stakeholders in managing the provision of CTs. All of the structures, processes, procedures, guidelines and supports developed as part of the pilots favourably position ETBs to further enhance their provision of training in response to identified labour market skill needs.

The successful development and application of the model is testimony to the resourcefulness of ETB management and staff but also to the model itself and the collaborative approach to developing strong partnerships and synergies inherent within it. The impact of the recession, the recruitment moratorium, and the major structural reforms of the FET sector, have been significant and presented major challenges to ETB management and staff. However, despite these environmental challenges they have been successful in applying the Career Traineeship model of training to the development and delivery of labour market focused training. All stakeholders gained in terms of their own learning from involvement in the CT pilots.

#### 6.1.1 Key Lessons from the Pilot CTs

This evaluation of the pilot applications of the CT model has found that they incorporate the critical features of effective WBL programmes. The pilots:

- deliver structured and planned learning outcomes for trainees;
- respond directly to specific sectoral and occupational skill needs of companies, and offer them advantages over alternative recruitment and training options;
- blend the development of learners' theoretical knowledge and aptitude with the development of competence within a working environment;
- offer participants the opportunity to gain recognised qualifications and pursue further career progression; and
- support the development of other personal attributes and strengths that underpin employability, including work ethic, teamwork, problem solving, motivation, and self-confidence.

The evidence and findings confirm that the development and application of the model is welcomed by employers, ETBs and trainees, as being relevant to each of their circumstances, and capable of supporting their long-term goals and ambitions:

- for trainees, the findings are that the CT model offers a unique opportunity in Ireland to enhance knowledge, skills, and competence, to gain tangible work experience and proficiency in applying those skills and capabilities in real work settings, and to gain employment as well as recognised qualifications to support future career ambitions;
- for employers, it was found that the model can effectively fill recognised skill gaps, enhance productivity, and thereby support critical business goals.

Furthermore, it can be shown to generate other advantages in terms of identifying potential new employees, staff recruitment, staff retention, sectoral networking opportunities and exposure to wider upskilling opportunities and models of potential value elsewhere in the business;

- the model has built the capacity of ETBs in their role in enterprise engagement and support, as well as in developing and designing innovative models of training programme development and provision.

Over the period of developing and applying the model in pilot form, a lot of experience, knowledge, capacity and resources have been built up nationally and within ETBs, all of which will support and underpin its future and wider effective and efficient application. Its development and early roll-out has depended highly on dedicated and structured central support, however the level of direct central support, particularly proactivity on the part of SOLAS, will continue to diminish as ETBs become more experienced and develop greater self-sufficiency in developing and delivering repeat and new career traineeships, and as they develop their supports for local enterprise and widen their scope of WBL programmes and opportunities.

Other important achievements and findings are as follows:

- CTs that have been completed have provided structured and formalised training programmes with workplace competences and skills requirements matched with modules and content within a relevant programme curriculum. These attributes also characterise CTs both in planning and delivery phases;
- where completed, the CTs have resulted in trainees gaining accredited qualifications that would serve to enhance eligibility for FET or HE programmes leading to higher-qualifications, while their CT experiences appear in many cases to have positively affected trainees' appetite and motivation to explore or pursue further qualifications and career ladders;
- highly skilled classroom teachers and trainers have for the most part been sourced and utilised, although sourcing has been challenging in some cases. Workplace training, tuition, supervision and guidance has not always matched the same standards, although ETBs are actively seeking to develop the capacity of employers through training and support in order to fulfil these roles more thoroughly, consistently and systematically;
- assessment requirements and processes have generally been both rigorous and relevant;
- training content appears to have been appropriate and relevant. This is due to the rigorous Occupational Skills Profiling and programme design processes. The core content appears to be current and up-to-date, and highly industry-relevant. It encompasses a balance of general and specialist skills that are transferable within and across sectors and occupations. In each local area that has delivered a second or subsequent phase of CT delivery, appropriate changes to course content and coverage have been made, demonstrating continuous learning and shaping of content to meet needs;
- the balance of on- and off-the-job training has been a further strength of the pilot CTs. Lessons have emerged from the first year of operation that will inform subsequent delivery, for example in relation to induction periods before work-based elements, and in the duration, timing and mix of different classroom- and work-based modules. However, no changes have been substantial, and each are considered small-scale adjustments likely to support overall effectiveness;

- much has been achieved in determining, defining and documenting appropriate roles and responsibilities in these pilot CTs, including those of SOLAS, national employer organisations, the ETBs, external training providers, classroom tutors, and employers, Workplace Supervisors and trainees. Ensuring that the roles and the responsibilities of each are continuously communicated, understood, and effectively fulfilled will remain fundamental to the model working effectively;
- effective mentoring is reported as having featured in each CT delivered, whether provided by classroom tutors, WPSs, and/or other staff within the employer businesses. While often reported as highly effective and well received, its provision has perhaps been inconsistent. While distinct from workplace supervision, the mentoring function and role should also be elaborated and explained to workplace supervisors in their prior training, and its importance emphasised for new CTs yet to begin the delivery phase;
- one of the outcomes of the processes followed in driving the national CT pilot process has been that ETBs now have in place a structured approach with clear processes, procedures and guidelines to engage productively with employers in any industry sector or sub-sector, to identify skill needs, and to develop a suitable training response. The capacity of the ETBs has in this regard been significantly built;
- all of the outputs of the CT project with regard to structures, systems, procedures, guidelines, and training can be applied at a macro level as well as at a specific programme level. This is evident in the way ETBs have allocated responsibility to specific managers for employer engagement, and have developed specific roles and responsibilities for ongoing functions that serve both existing CTs, as well as wider employer engagement, training development, and programme innovation; and
- while it is evident that SOLAS will need to continue to provide management oversight and support in terms of the coordination, development, and monitoring of CTs on an ongoing basis, its level of direct involvement, planning, organisation and spearheading of CT development should diminish as ETB capacities and experience further strengthen.

Many lessons arise from the pilot phase, however this reflects the new approach which CTs represent, and all stakeholders are learning lessons and adapting their approaches accordingly. Among the main lessons learned are:

- the CTs require significant time, resources and investment to develop, bring to the point of delivery, and successfully complete. Many of the challenges that have arisen reflect insufficient awareness of this at the outset on the part of different stakeholders;
- the resources and input required on the part of the ETBs can be very substantial, most particularly in the pilot or initial development and roll-out of a sectoral or occupational CT. Subsequent phases of delivery will likely be less resource-intensive than initial ones, however the management, monitoring and engagement role remains substantial;
- changing labour market conditions, and the diminishing numbers of jobseekers and unemployed, may require eligibility to be extended further towards part-time employees, school leavers not in receipt of social welfare payments, and others;

- the need for a national branding, promotional campaign and CT marketing effort will likely increase as the target number of CTs expands and labour market conditions tighten;
- ensuring appropriate employer support, commitment and involvement throughout the various planning and delivery phases is an ongoing challenge. Amongst the pilot CTs reviewed the level of investment has varied, sometimes reflecting the sector in question, and the size and structure of employer businesses. Small businesses by their nature have fewer resources they can invest, and in such cases the ability to devote time and energy to the CT can be limited irrespective of the employer's need of it. The role of the ETB in interacting and in effect assisting the employer to participate in such cases is evident;
- occupational (as opposed to sectorally) defined CTs may increase the need for ETB leadership and drive in the employer engagement process, as there is little sectoral interest, sectoral networking or sectoral learning opportunities for employers that would motivate more active engagement;
- whether or not employers should offer some financial compensation, stipend or expense coverage does not appear to be consistent across sectors or CTs, and a number of ETBs report confusion and inconsistency in this regard. A more systematic and formal approach to this aspect may need to be established; and
- the timing and scheduling of the development and delivery phases and processes and tasks within them are important determinants of success. When to engage with employers (and what to communicate to them about the timing of later phases), when to deliver WPS training, and when to engage contracted trainers, are all areas where ETBs are learning from experience and seeking to adapt their approach for future CTs. The important findings from the pilots are to schedule the components (a) with realistic expectations about how long each will require, and (b) to ensure shared understanding of timeframes among stakeholders.

### 6.1.2 CT as a Model of Work-Based Learning

While the CTs reviewed as part of the evaluation are diverse, and several have yet to enter delivery phases, it is clear that as a group they share fundamental features, characteristics and attributes that represent effective applications of WBL. They have been found to have adhered to best practice features of WBL in that they:

- involve or will involve structured accredited training courses combining integrated and complementary modules delivered in both classroom and on-the-job settings;
- incorporate significant periods of supervised WBL, demonstration and knowledge acquisition, providing scope for numerous and varied competences, skills and capabilities to be applied, developed and enhanced;
- indicate knowledge and skill acquisition occurring at theoretical, practical, and applied levels (based on those that were completed or at an advanced phase when reviewed);
- provide evidence of both hard and soft skill development, with the latter including communication, professionalism, teamwork and with employers reporting enhancement of wider personal and professional attributes among participants (for example, self-motivation, confidence, work ethic, etc.);

- support the positive engagement of learners, and help some employers identify trainees and job candidates possessing core motivational and commitment strengths they report as difficult to identify or develop through other recruitment processes and channels;
- provide evidence of networking gains for learners arising from their group classroom and work-based participation, with many becoming, beneficially in their own view, acquainted with new peers, tutors, supervisors, work colleagues and managers;
- provide strong anticipated transition paths to employment for many trainees.

While there was stimulated ETB capacity and capability to deliver effective WBL, ensuring established and new CTs maintain the critical features of effective WBL models will require continued investment in and development of ETB resources, employer engagement, trainee sourcing and identification, and new programme design.

### 6.1.3 Widening the Application of the Model (“Cascading”)

There are several core structures and processes common to each of the pilots which provide the foundation for cascading – i.e. applying the model in other ETBs and sectors:

- they have (or will likely have) developed and successfully delivered standardised but employer-relevant training programmes, with appropriate course content, accreditation and modular components, that meet real sectoral skills needs in local economic settings;
- they have involved the identification of, engagement with, and partnership among and between interested employers and groups of employers, and ETBs;
- ETBs have developed design and delivery capacities and are learning or have experienced the processes and work involved in establishing and delivering CTs;
- where contract training has been used, contractors have successfully delivered programmes, including classroom-based teaching as well as wider CT management functions. In this respect contract trainers have developed important capacities to support future CTs;
- despite recruitment challenges, through the development and adoption of a range of strategies trainees have been identified, engaged and have completed the programme; and
- strong, collaborative and supportive relationships across ETBs have and continue to be formed, through national structures such as sectoral working groups and collaborative development groups. These have facilitated both formal and informal communication and co-operation at these levels, and effective and efficient practices while ensuring hurdles and difficulties are anticipated and avoided.

With 18 programme iterations either complete or in delivery phase, and another 13 in development, the model has already shown its capacity for cascading, and since first conceived the model’s adoption has increased across both ETBs (the majority of which have or are planning to deliver a CT), as well as sectors (now with seven sectoral applications in development or delivery).

#### 6.1.4 Model Sustainability

The CTs that were developed and delivered earliest are each beginning or well advanced on their second year of programme delivery with a new intake of trainees, and several report that they are currently planning a third. They each therefore appear sustainable over the short to medium-term in their initial form and scale. Longer-term, the sustainability challenges will likely revolve around:

- continued interest and buy-in from employers already engaged, and ongoing identification of new employer candidates to become involved;
- continued buoyancy in the sectors concerned, and/or continued demand for personnel with these skills despite (or even to help overcome) economic challenges;
- key personnel in ETBs and employer businesses remaining in place, and/or ensuring their replacements are knowledgeable of CTs, WBL principles and the practicalities involved in designing and delivering them;
- ensuring ETB personnel with CT responsibilities have the time and resources required to devote to them;
- continuous and demonstrated success of past CTs, and promotion and awareness raising of such success with future participants (both employers and trainees);
- establishment of a funding framework to support application of the CT model in addressing labour market needs; and
- the ability to recruit subsequent groups of motivated trainees in a tightening labour market.

#### 6.1.5 Model Scalability

Some of the CTs have increased in scale moderately over the course of their early iterations, and the model is one that is in principle appropriate for delivery at a greater scale than in the pilots. However, the potential for any of the current CTs to operate on a significantly larger scale will depend on a number of challenges being addressed, including:

- insufficient ETB time, financial and human resources devoted to their development and management;
- in some cases emerging challenges regarding the identification of future trainee participants;
- accessing classroom tutors with the specified occupational skills and competences to deliver classroom elements;
- accessing appropriate training premises, with appropriate facilities and equipment;
- ensuring the geographical coverage of any CT is such that transportation issues do not hinder participation or lead to drop out, or else financially supporting transportation costs much more so than currently; and
- accessing sufficient central support from both individual ETBs and SOLAS.

## 6.2 Recommendations

### CT Model

- The CT model has shown itself to represent an effective model of work-based learning and one that can simultaneously address the needs of employers and individuals seeking to enhance their own skills and to progress on a chosen career path. Most ETBs have now become accustomed to the model and experienced it in a development and/or implementation phase. It should be mainstreamed within the suite of programmes that comprise general FET provision, and promoted beyond ETBs for the benefit of other agencies and organisations with a role in WBL.

### Sectors and Occupations

- New sectors with known skill shortages in which it may be appropriate to develop CTs should be identified with due consideration of their attractiveness in offering career options for learners, their homogeneity, typical firm sizes and locations, the existence of strong industry bodies, market conditions and likely sectoral growth and expansion.
- In considering occupational CTs, for some employers there is likely to be little commonalities with other employers, and thus the employer engagement process, tutor/employer co-ordination, appropriate sequencing of classroom-based modules, and trainee/employer matching process may each be more challenging for ETBs in occupational rather than sectoral CTs. ETBs should therefore ensure specialist and sufficient resources will be available to develop, service and manage such programmes.
- Strategic partnerships with sectoral agencies and bodies such as Teagasc, Fáilte Ireland, and the Irish Hotels Federation have significantly benefited the development of the model and its application in local contexts. Wider partnerships will likely enhance the process of increasing the scale of individual CTs as well as the numbers of local examples developed and delivered.

### Employer Engagement

- To ensure effective partnership, continued engagement with employers is critical at all stages. It needs to begin well in advance of programme development and delivery and needs to continue strongly throughout roll-out phases. ETB management is and should continue to be strongly advised that continued engagement and support for employers is critical for success. The lead-in time for the pilot CTs was approximately six to eight months from initial identification of labour market needs to delivery. However, it has shortened significantly for more recent CTs, reflecting experiences gained, resources deployed and supports now in place.
- Employers need to understand both their obligations as well as their likely rewards and benefits. While SOLAS advised ETBs and employers during the pilots through briefings and support documentation of the benefits to all stakeholders from participation in a CT, there is a role for local specially-designated co-ordination that engages with employers, understands their skills needs and how the programme may assist in meeting them. It would also serve to promote the programme while explaining how it operates, and could act as a conduit for groups of employers in development and delivery phases as set out in the CT model.

- The three-way communication and engagement between employer/WPS, tutor and trainee throughout the roll-out of modules and programme delivery, as reflected in the CT model, is critical to success and needs to be continuously nurtured and recognised as such.
- A strength of the model is the up-to-date learning content which results from strong and comprehensive employer involvement in programme design and delivery, a feature much more challenging for purely classroom and college-based models which do not have CTs significant WBL approach. Employers should always be encouraged to ensure all learning covers the most recent and modern content in whatever subject is covered.

### **Workplace Supervision (WPS)**

- WPS roles may need both refining and re-emphasis dependent on the sector. In hotels in particular, the role is often either shared between for example HR managers and service managers, or falls between these two stools. Specific task leaders by definition will not be able to shadow trainees across the different tasks and modules they cover while in the workplace, rather they will typically have supervision and training responsibility only on their specific task. In small businesses in other sectors, it may not be possible to confine the role to one person exclusively. One suggestion has been to create Deputy WPS roles, or recognise that the role must be shared between overall managers and task-related supervisors. While employers are free to nominate who and how many they choose to take on WPS roles, they need to be encouraged to consider the role quite strategically with a medium and long-term function and potential impact.
- The non-optional status of WPS training, needs to be understood and accepted by employers, while delivery details (e.g. duration, location, etc.) need to continually be made appropriate and feasible for employers. These are requirements of the CT model, and it is primarily a question of compliance. The requirement is advised through all briefings, employer advisory body, ETB management and staff.
- Those with WPS roles must have experience in the full range of tasks and skills in which they are supervising and delivering training. While a requirement of the Agreement, it needs to be effectively highlighted and implemented to ensure the effectiveness of work-based learning.
- Effective mentoring is reported as having featured in each CT that has been delivered, whether provided by classroom tutors, WPSs, and/or other staff within the businesses. While often reported as highly effective and well received, its provision has perhaps been inconsistent. While distinct from skills coaching and assessment, supervision and feedback, the mentoring function and role should also be elaborated and explained to workplace supervisors in their prior training, and should be an explicit role in which supervisors are trained, and its importance should be emphasised for new CTs yet to begin the delivery phase.

### **Classroom-based Tutors and Trainers**

- The identification, procurement and effective participation of classroom-based tutors and trainers is critical to CT success. ETBs need to be in a position to involve them early in the process of CT development and rely on their professional input and involvement to the extent needed. This calls for foresight on the part of the ETB, strong knowledge of local external training providers and



in-house expertise, an ability to procure such input seamlessly, the resources to do so, and the scope to define the role as widely as will likely be required to ensure integration of directed and work-based learning.

### **Programme Design**

- The collaborative approach to design using the CT model could be used elsewhere, for example in employee and workforce skills development initiatives. It has many advantages including the employer's role in defining skills requirements, in training specification, in targeting trainees, and in ensuring trainee motivation and support.
- The OSP process ensures programme design directly reflects needs, while further detailed design involving cross-ETB collaboration, input and learning, is also a novel feature likely to be beneficial in other programme contexts.
- ICT Training may need to be made a formal programme component where not already incorporated (although some CTs have recognised this and introduced appropriate modules in evolving tranches of CTs).

### **Accreditation**

- While not likely to arise for all new CTs, where any require the generation of new qualifications, the process of establishing them with accreditation bodies can take time which should be anticipated and scheduled in CT planning and roll-out.

### **Programme Management and Delivery**

- In terms of on-the-job learning, the optional and non-optional status of different modules is important to understand for employers and trainees. In some cases, we have found reluctance to put equal emphasis on some modules as against others, either by trainees or employers.
- Engagement and commitment within different levels of the employer business is also critical. While executives or HR managers may find the programme attractive and important, those whose day-to-day responsibilities include CT training and trainee supervision, need similar levels of commitment and ability and support to fulfil that role.
- Suitable calendar scheduling should be decided with reference to the particular sectors for which CTs are developed (and any seasonality issues in those sectors for example).
- Dedicated resources and support structures will need to be put in place for its effective operation as a mainstream training programme. Centrally, there will be an ongoing need for support, advice, promotion and facilitation by SOLAS, particularly for ETBs not yet active in CT development and delivery. However, the need for such central support may decline as each ETB becomes experienced in CT roll-out, after which the central role may focus more on co-ordination, monitoring, resource allocation, reporting and evaluation.
- All participants need to be given support, training and guidance in the appropriate and beneficial use of Moodle in CT delivery and management.
- Working and advisory groups that operate on a national or regional basis should be maintained as features of the CT support structure, as they are effective in sharing information, informing key people from different ETBs of approaches to take and pitfalls to avoid, and provide a means of spreading good practices efficiently and effectively.

- Within ETBs CTs should be developed and managed by dedicated staff responsible for employer liaison and support in their jurisdictions. Ideally, they should work alongside colleagues that support apprenticeship and other programmes and activities in the area of in-company training and training of the employed, and they should be adequately resourced in terms of personnel, travel and subsistence, venue hire, contracted training provision, and specialist (ad-hoc) consultancy in sectoral subject matter expertise.
- Classroom-based training and course delivery within workplace settings or premises can be beneficial where dedicated training centres are unavailable or alternatives are expensive.

### **Trainee Targeting**

- Strong engagement between ETBs and DSP/Intreo prior to programme promotion and recruitment is necessary to target appropriate trainee candidates. Engagement between the principal agencies should be modelled on the processes developed and piloted by SOLAS, DSP and MSLETB which proved effective in practice.
- Geographical and transport issues have the potential to constrain future success. For trainees, participation and completion needs to be feasible from a transportation and cost point of view, and travel reimbursement rates need to be realistic.
- Matching of trainees and employers by tutors and local programme managers is likely to yield results in terms of ensuring participants have the right level of pre-existing skills, and the right level of motivation. It is a requirement of the CT model that employers must be involved in recruitment of trainees.

### **Administration**

- The administrative burden of CT planning and delivery on both ETBs and employers is reported by many to be extensive and a constraint to wider participation. Any scope to streamline the reporting and administrative obligations or provision of additional resources should be pursued, particularly where CTs involve small or micro-businesses.

### **Financial Contributions**

- Several ETBs express concern regarding companies providing a financial contribution to trainees in lieu of time spent on WBL. The concerns relate to the official status of such payments, their voluntary nature, and the inconsistency regarding which trainees receive them and how this can affect trainee enthusiasm and the challenges associated with allocating trainees to employers. A consistent and more rigid approach is required, based on the principle that no trainee should be financially disadvantaged by virtue of participating. A national working group should be convened to advise on the appropriate approach to employer-to-trainee financial contributions and stipends in WBL contexts.

### **Career Planning and Progression**

- In the efforts to establish programmes, course curricula, content, accreditation and delivery, as well as the extensive work with employers and elsewhere to effectively deliver a CT, sight shouldn't be lost of the fact that these are Career Traineeships. ETBs should seek to expose and inform trainees of subsequent

career options, follow-on qualifications, and future career paths to which participation on the immediate course may serve as a gateway.

### **Model Branding and Promotion**

- Mainstreaming the CT model into general FET provision should be accompanied by a process of national branding, promotion and information provision. The programme also needs to be promoted to trainees and candidates in local contexts, to parents and families, to career advisors, and guidance counsellors, and others, with respect to its unique attractions, potential benefits and trainee obligations and expectations, relative to other FET or career options supported by the processes developed in partnership by DSP, SOLAS and MSLETB. Effective branding and promotion is essential to ensuring CTs make a significant contribution to the strategic development of traineeship provision in Ireland.

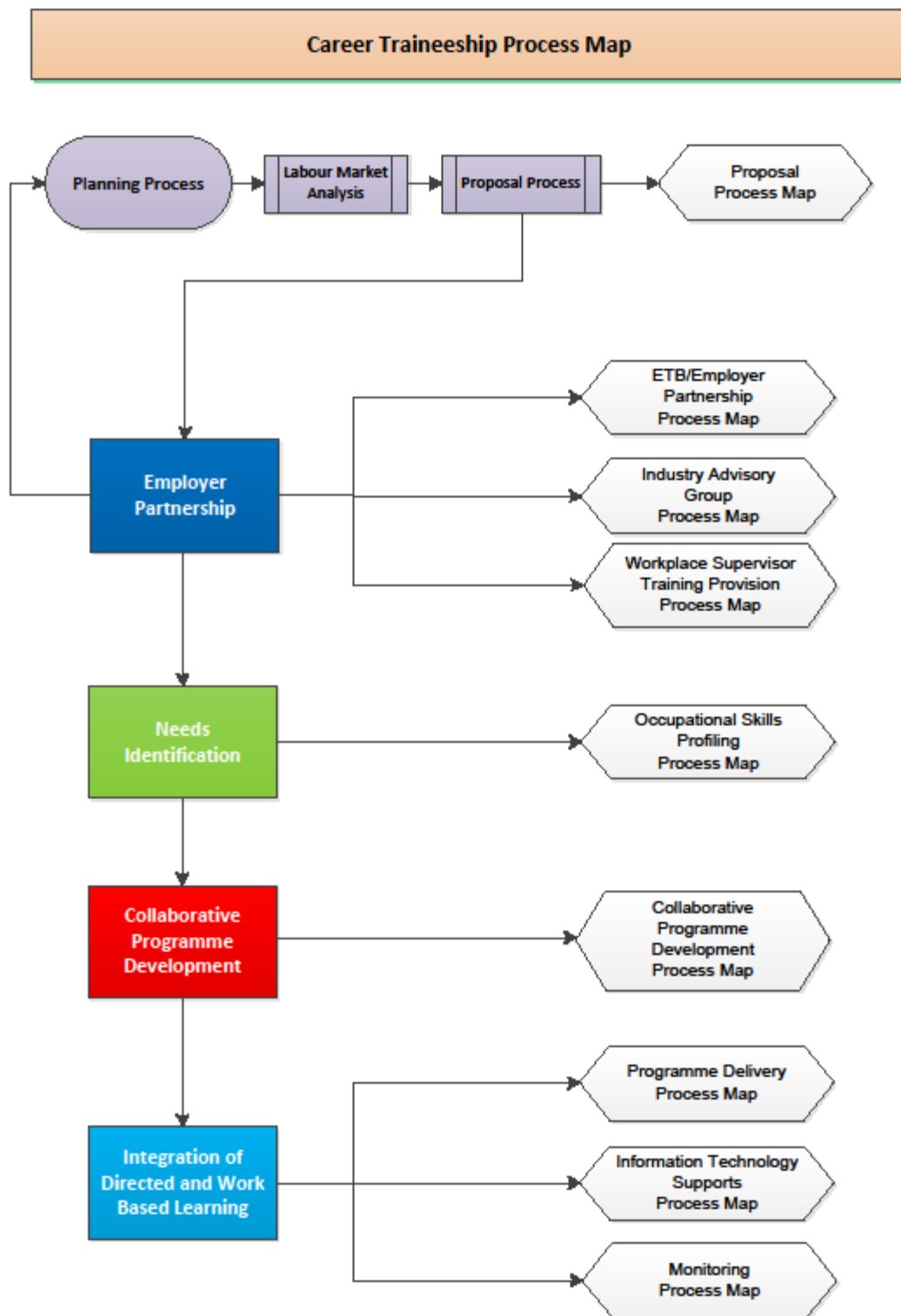
# ANNEXES

## Annex 1 Targets from Action Plan to expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020

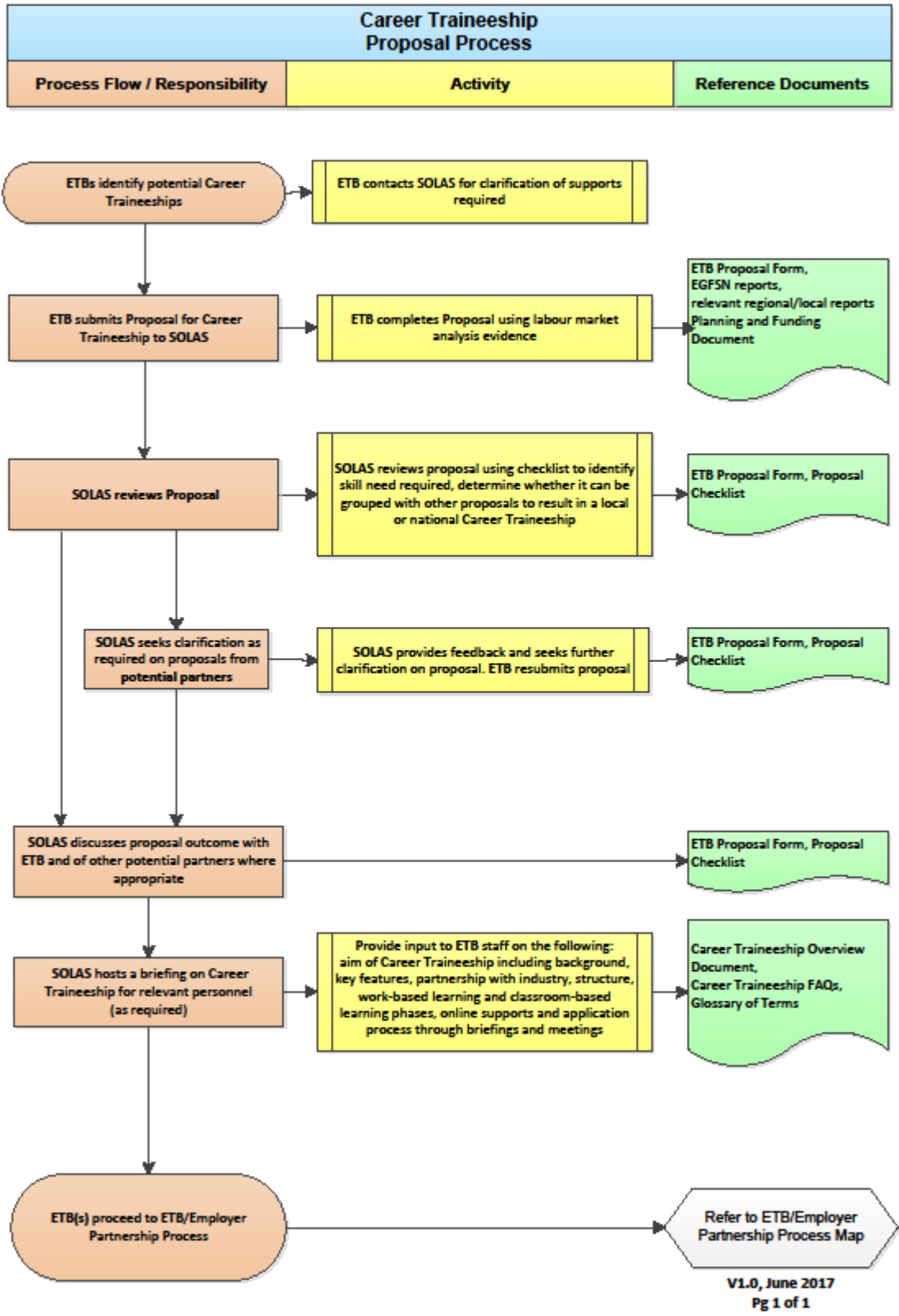
Existing Traineeships	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of 'live' traineeship programmes	24	24	24	24	24
Target new enrolments per annum	2,400	2,400	3,000	3,500	3,500
New / Re-launched Traineeships					
Number of traineeship programmes (cumulative)	2	4	10	20	30
Planned new enrolments per annum	100	200	900	1,500	1,500
Total target trainee enrolments per annum	2,500	2,600	3,900	5,000	5,000

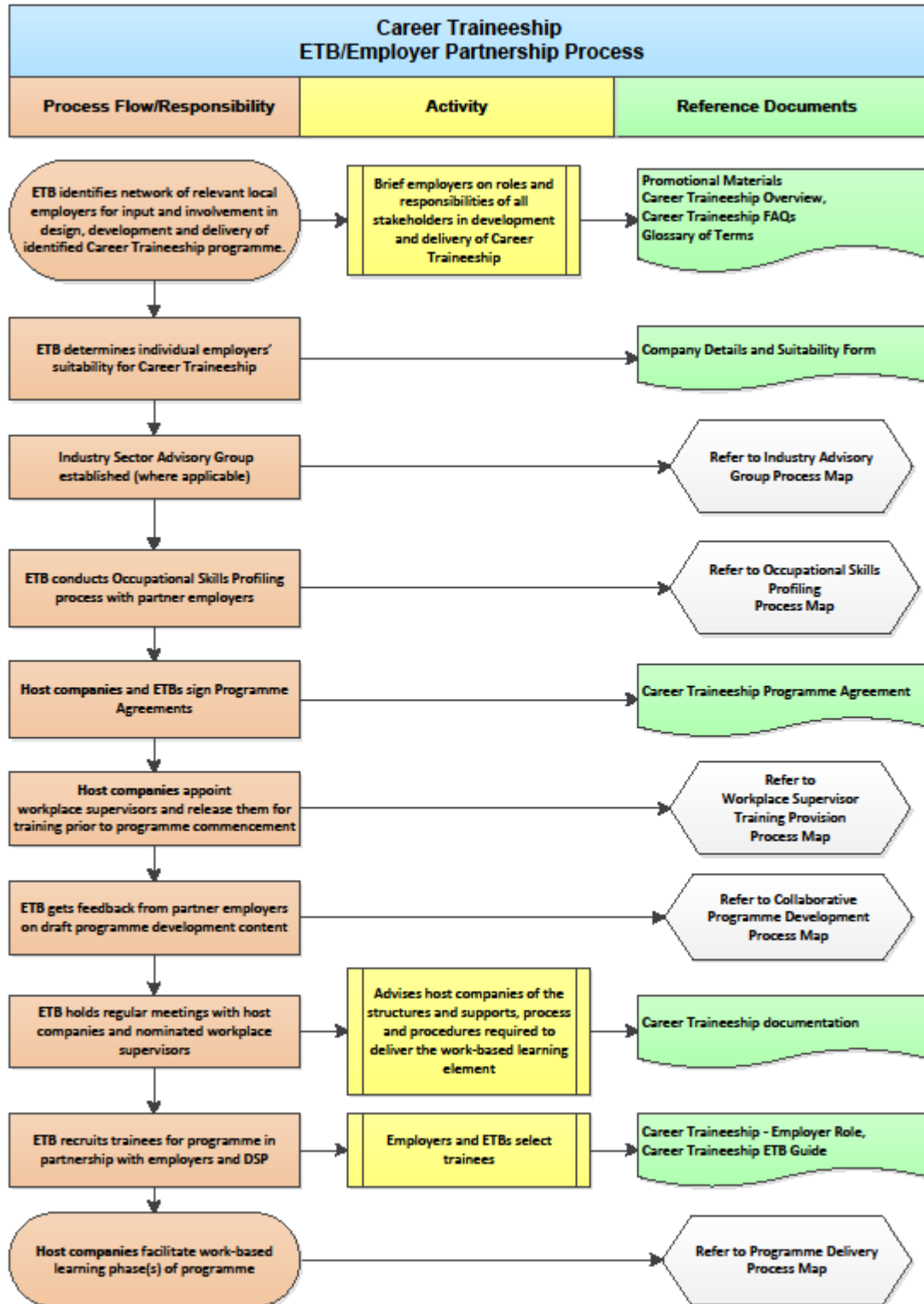
*Adapted from Table 2 - Action Plan To Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020*

## Annex 2 Career Traineeship Process Maps



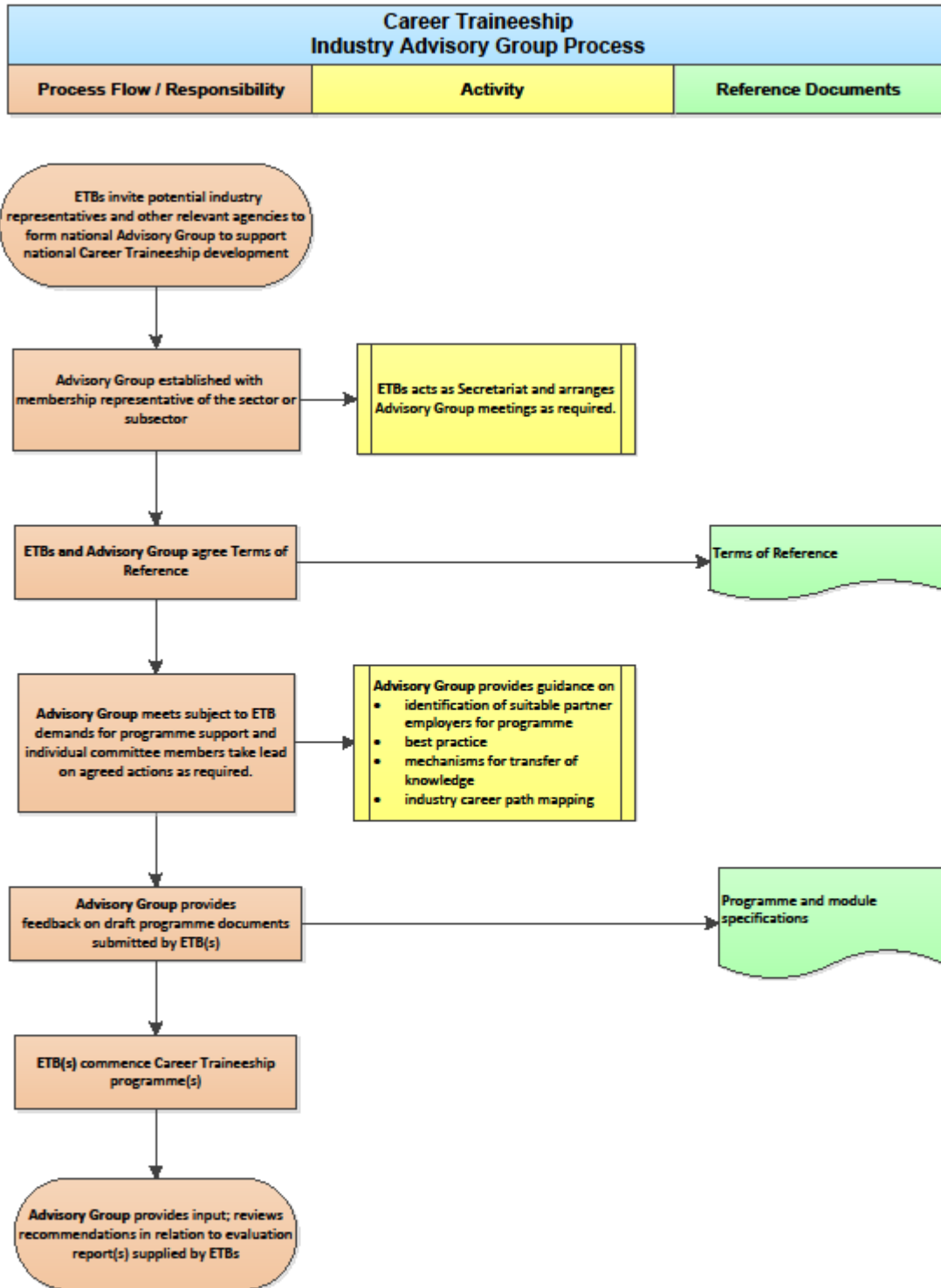
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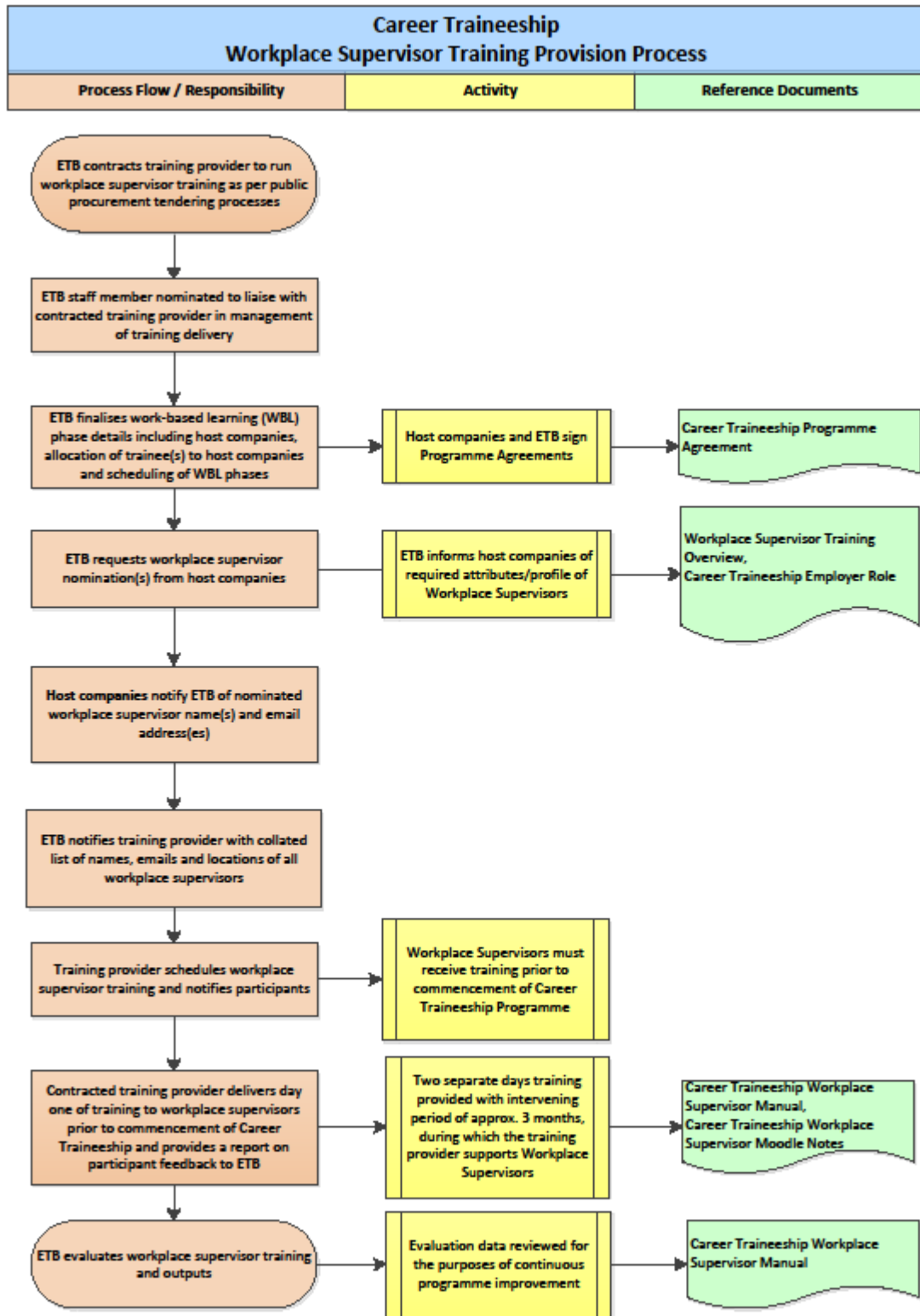


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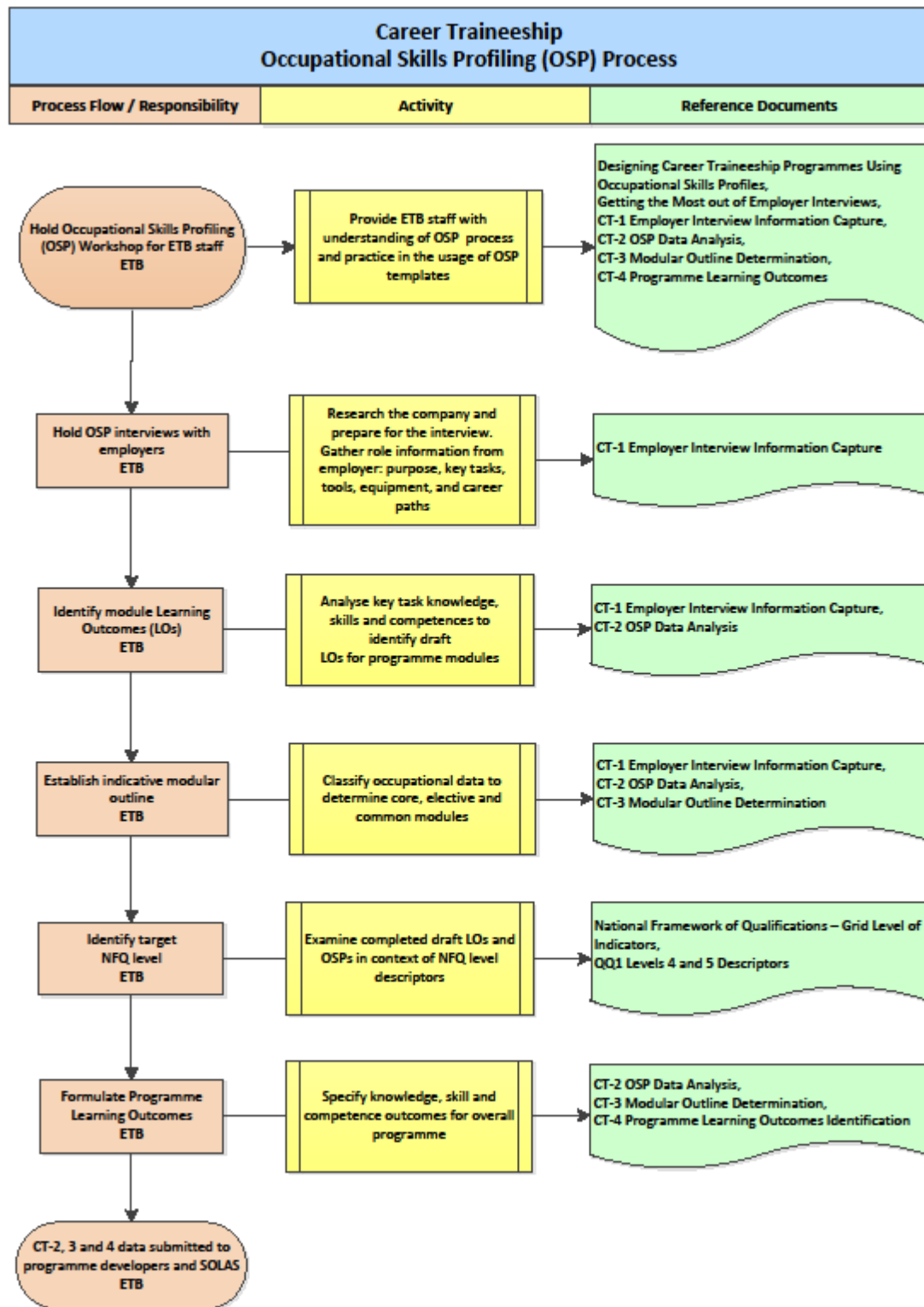




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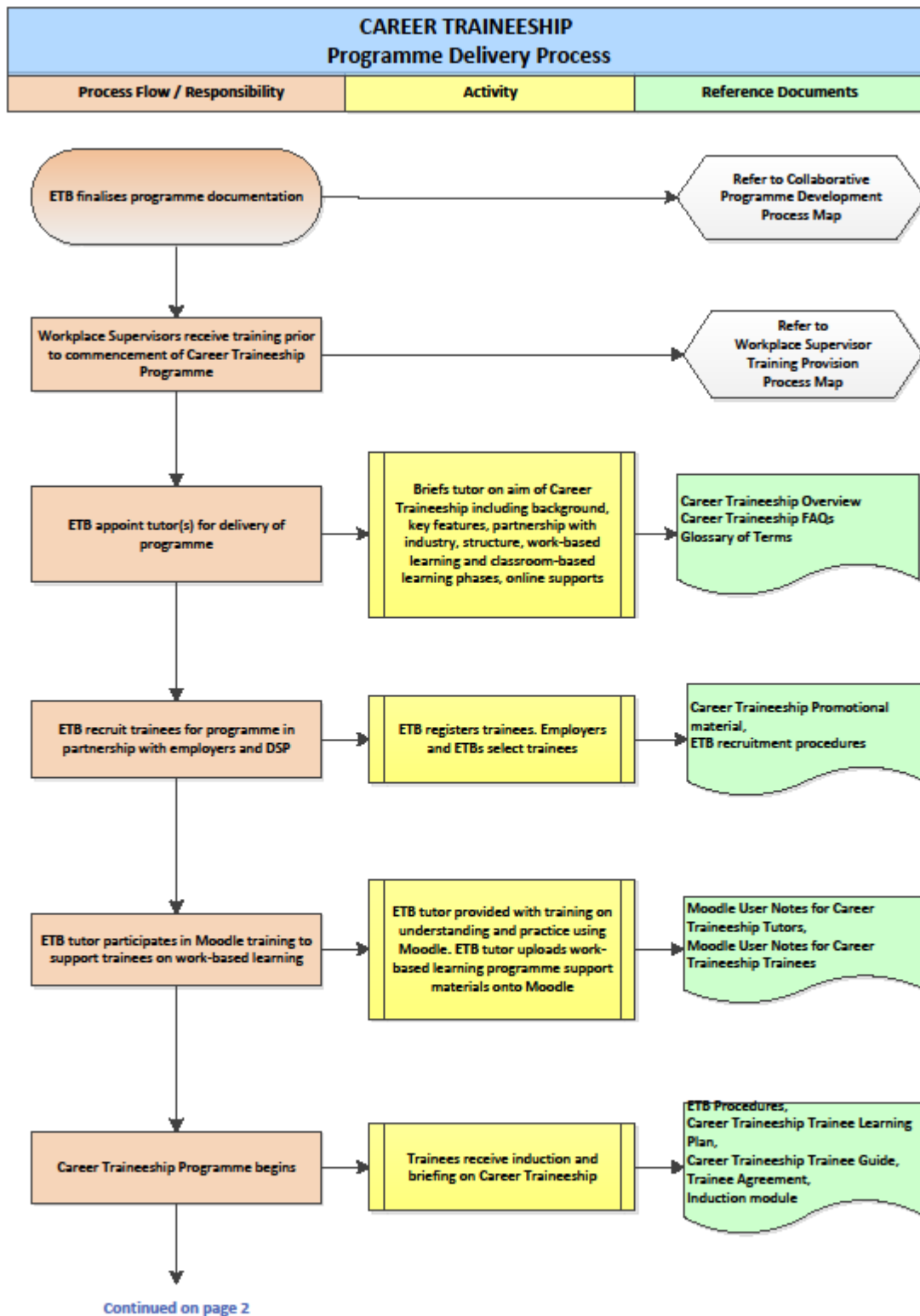
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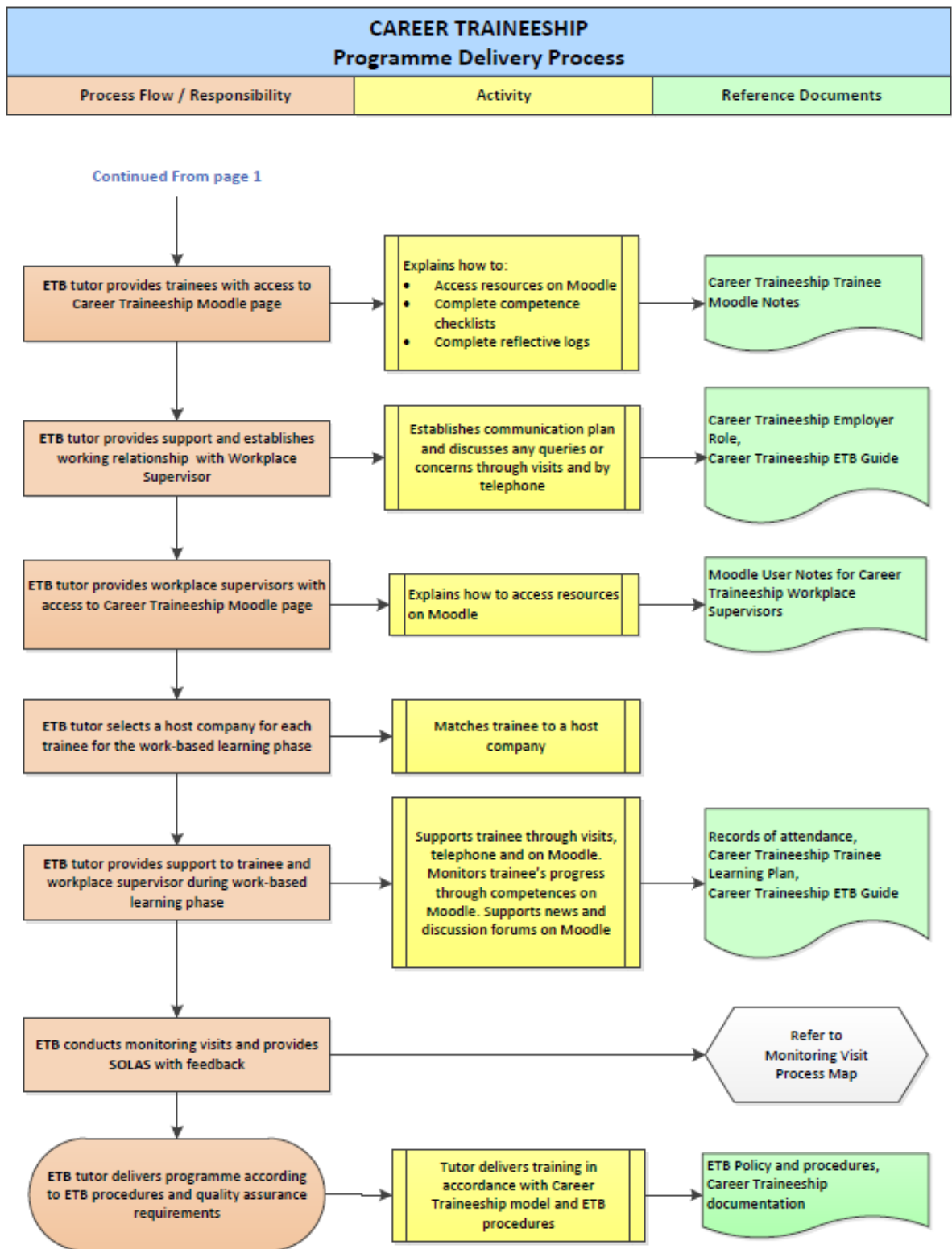


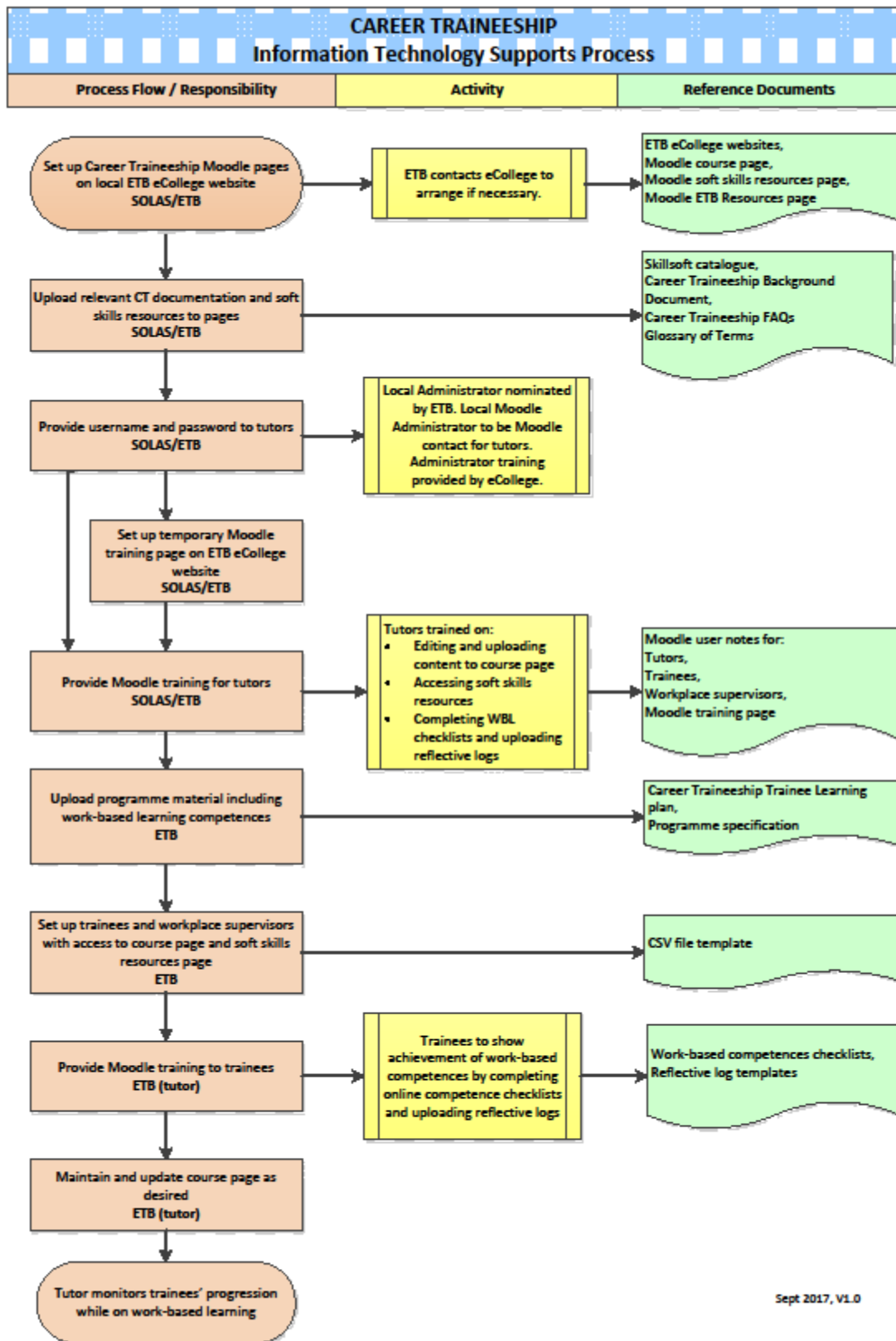
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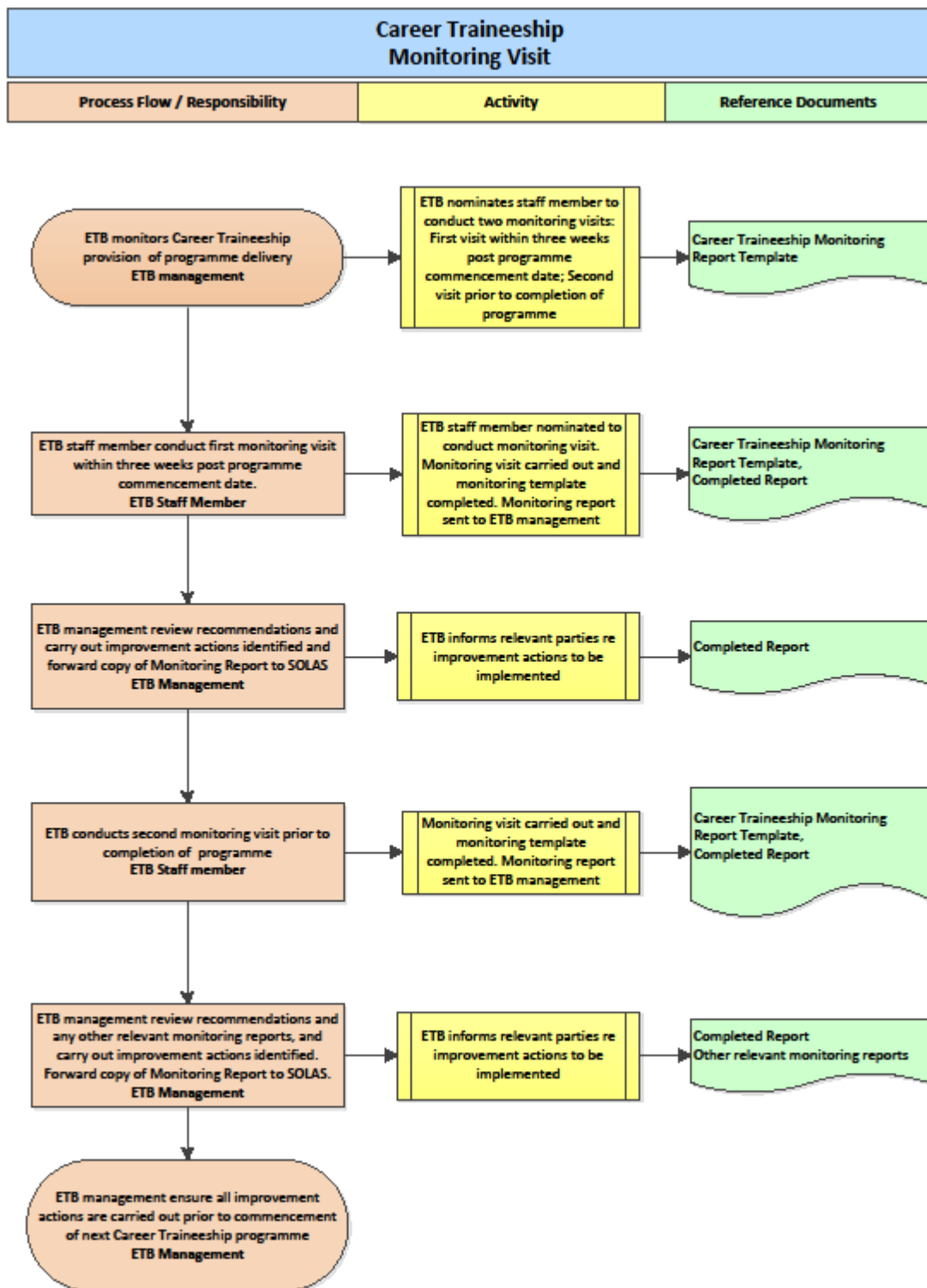
V1.0, June 2017







Sept 2017, V1.0



V1.0, August 2017