



Bedford Advice Forum Supported Training and Education Project

SUMMARY REPORT and PROJECT EVALUATION

September 2004



Funded by



Bedford Advice Forum Supported Training and Education Project

Co-ordinated by 

Supported by 
*Promoting the provision
and quality of advice services
in Mid and North Bedfordshire*



Funded by  

The **project evaluation** of BAF-STEP was organised, on behalf of Bedford Advice Forum, by **advice^{UK}** (Eastern Region).



This **report** has been written by Len Simkins at **advice^{UK}** (Eastern Region).

For further information on BAF-STEP, contact **advice^{UK}** (01234 360607)

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

Bedford Advice Forum Supported Training and Education Project (BAF-STEP) was funded by the **European Social Fund**, and **Bedfordshire and Luton Learning and Skills Council**.

The **main aim of the project** was to help develop skills and NVQ qualifications for the advice and information sector in Mid and North Bedfordshire.

The project was overseen by **Bedford Advice Forum** (in partnership with **Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association**). Special thanks go to BPHA because without their support as contract holder, BAF-STEP would not have happened at all.

Project Structure

The project, which ran from July 2002 until December 2003, consisted of **three stages**:

1. **Research stage**
2. **Organisational support stage**
3. **Training and NVQ stage**

Main Outcomes

There were very successful outcomes from all of the stages in the project.

Details can be found on the following two pages.

BAF-STEP Research

The research helped identify the training and staff development needs of BAF members. During this stage:

- **49 BAF members completed research questionnaires** – this was an 88% return rate
- **27 members were visited by a research assistant** during the research stage to help members focus on training and staff development
- **22 members requested further information and support on NVQ programmes**
- **24 members provided further information on their IT training needs**

The research results gave very good information about BAF members (e.g. location, type of organisation, type of work, number of staff etc.) and also gave very good details on the training and staff development needs of members.

Further information on the research can be found in a separate report (**Additional Report 1**).

BAF-STEP Organisational Support

The organisational support provided direct support to BAF members to help them develop staff development and training plans. During this stage:

- **38 consultancy sessions** were provided for BAF members
- **Direct assistance was given to 14 BAF members**
- **12 Training and Staff Development Plans were produced** by BAF members using a BAF-STEP template

Further information on the organisational support can be found in a separate report (**Additional Report 1**).

BAF-STEP Training Programme

A comprehensive training programme was organised for BAF members. The **main outcomes** were:

- **27 training sessions** held on a variety of subjects
- The **courses were attended by 296 people**, 289 of whom were from BAF member organisations. 268 of these were eligible for ESF funding
- **39 BAF member organisations** (76% of the membership) made use of the BAF-STEP training programme
- **168 different individuals** from BAF member organisations attended the courses
- 25 people from BAF member organisations were awarded the **St John Ambulance Certificate in Emergency Aid in the Workplace for Appointed Persons**
- **Feedback** from the courses was generally very positive

Further information on the training programme can be found in a separate report (**Additional Report 2**).

BAF-STEP NVQ Programme

An NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) programme was organised for BAF members. The **main outcomes** were:

- **10 candidates (from 7 BAF member organisations) registered** for the BAF-STEP NVQ programme – for a total of **79 units**
- **11 workshops** were arranged for NVQ candidates – which were attended in total by **32 candidates**
- **12 one-to-one support sessions** were provided for candidates sessions
- **6 candidates successfully completed 12 NVQ units** during the BAF-STEP project
- **Feedback** from the candidates on the programme extremely positive
- Due to the success of the programme, BAF agreed to **continue funding the 8 remaining candidates** on the programme to allow them to continue working towards their NVQs in 2004.

Further information on the NVQ programme can be found in a separate report (**Additional Report 2**).

Conclusion

There can be no doubt that the BAF-STEP project was an enormous success.

Although this was the first time that BAF had undertaken such a major project, and the first time it had had to deal with such a large amount of funding, the final outcomes were extremely positive in many ways:

- All of the aims of the project were met
- All but one of the targets were met
- All of the project reviews and evaluations were successful and positive
- Very positive feedback was received from BAF members.

Although the project was very successful in itself, it should not be forgotten that the project also brought about a considerable number of **positive benefits for BAF members and their staff**, especially in terms of staff training and development.

All of these positive benefits of the project not only helped BAF members themselves, but should also **benefit the local community** because organisations will have better trained and developed staff – and will therefore be able to provide enhanced information and advice services to the public which will help prevent social exclusion.

This “**added value**” to the community means that the LSC/ESF funding was, in BAF’s opinion, money very well spent.

2. BAF-STEP SUMMARY REPORT

2.1 BACKGROUND TO BAF-STEP

2.1.1 INTRODUCTION

Bedford Advice Forum Supported Training and Education Project (BAF-STEP) was funded by the **European Social Fund**, and **Bedfordshire and Luton Learning and Skills Council**, to help develop skills and NVQ qualifications for the advice and information sector in Mid and North Bedfordshire.

The project was overseen by **Bedford Advice Forum**, in partnership with **Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association**.

Len Simkins, from advice^{UK} (Eastern Region) was appointed as the **Project Co-ordinator** for BAF-STEP.

The aims of BAF-STEP were to:

1. **Improve the organisational performance of BAF members through the development of paid staff and volunteers**
2. **Encourage the development of managers**
3. **Encourage the use of NVQs for staff development**
4. **Provide innovative training to meet identified skills gaps and shortages**

The project, which ran from July 2002 until December 2003, consisted of three stages:

1. **Research stage**
2. **Organisational support stage**
3. **Training and NVQ stage**

2.1.2 RESEARCH STAGE

The initial part of the project was to conduct research into what local advice sector organisations needed in terms of staff training and assistance in staff development.

The research was carried out by **infotrain**, on behalf of Bedford Advice Forum, in the period October 2002 – February 2003.

The research findings were based on:

- **Research questionnaires** received from 49 BAF members (an 88% return rate from members)
- **Research visits** made to 27 BAF members
- Information on **IT training needs** gathered from 24 BAF members

Further details of the research stage and the findings from the research can be found in a separate report (**Additional Report 1**).

2.1.3 ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT STAGE

The second part of the project was to provide consultancy support to BAF member agencies to help them develop, or enhance, their organisational training plans.

The organisational support was organised by **advice^{UK}**, on behalf of Bedford Advice Forum, in the period December 2002 – December 2003.

During the organisational support stage:

- **38 consultancy sessions** were provided for BAF members
- **Direct assistance** was given to 14 BAF members
- **12 Training and Staff Development Plans** were produced by BAF members using a BAF-STEP template

Further details of the organisational support stage can be found in a separate report (**Additional Report 1**).

2.1.4 TRAINING AND NVQ STAGE

The final part of the BAF-STEP project was the training and NVQ stage.

The planning for this part of the project was based on the information gathered during the research and organisational support stages of the project.

The training programme was organised by **advice^{UK}**, on behalf of Bedford Advice Forum, in the period March – November 2003.

During the training programme:

- **27 training sessions** were held on a variety of subjects - including advice skills, management, staff development, and computer courses.
- **Courses were attended by 296 people**, 289 of whom were from BAF member organisations.

The NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) programme was organised by **Quality Development Services**, on behalf of Bedford Advice Forum, in the period April – December 2003.

During the NVQ programme:

- **3 NVQ information sessions** were arranged for BAF members
- **10 candidates (from 7 BAF member organisations) registered** for a total of **79 NVQ units**
- **11 workshops** (which were attended in total by **32 candidates**) and **12 one-to-one support sessions** were provided for candidates
- **6 candidates successfully completed 12 NVQ units** during the BAF-STEP project

Further details of the training and NVQ stage can be found in a separate report (**Additional Report 2**).

2.2 FUNDING FOR BAF-STEP

The funding for BAF-STEP was provided under a **European Social Fund** co-financing arrangement through **Bedfordshire and Luton Learning and Skills Council**.

A tender had been submitted to the LSC in November 2001 following the issue of its prospectus, *Encouraging residents of Bedfordshire and Luton to participate in learning activities*, which had been launched in September 2001. The tender was made under **Policy Field 4 (Measure 2)** – “To identify and meet developing skills shortages, including those at higher levels”.

A positive decision was then made by the LSC on the tender in January 2002.

Although funding for the project had been due to start on 1st January 2002, due to various delays, the contract was not signed until 24th July 2002. Initially these delays were due to changes in staff at the LSC but later a further problem arose – almost at the last minute the issue that Bedford Advice Forum was not a legal entity was raised by the LSC as a reason for not being able to proceed with the contract. Very fortunately, **Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association** (a member of BAF) agreed to be the contract holder on BAF’s behalf. It must be emphasised that, without BPHA’s support, BAF-STEP would not have happened at all.

The delay in signing the contract meant that there were extreme time pressures to meet the project deadlines and targets because, in effect, 24 months of work had to be completed in 17 months.

The original tender for the project was for £70,000 over a two year period (January 2002 – December 2003). However, after a 5% deduction from the total for the LSC’s management fee, the contract for BAF-STEP was agreed at £66,500 (which in effect had to be spent in the period July 2002 – December 2003).

The funding for BAF-STEP was initially planned to be allocated as follows:

Item	Amount
Set-up costs	£902
Project co-ordination	£22,562
BAF management fee	£3,325
Research work	£4,513
Organisational support work	£4,513
Training programme	£12,635
NVQ programme	£18,050
Total	£66,500

The original plan was for the research and organisational support stages to be completed in 2002, and the training/NVQ stage to be undertaken in 2003. This meant that the funding would be spread over the two years as follows:

Year	Amount
2002	£24,250
2003	£42,250
Total	£66,500

2.3 STRUCTURE OF BAF-STEP

The contract holder, with the LSC, for the project was **Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association**. The person overseeing the contact at BPHA was **Annette Pacey**.

The project was organised by Bedford Advice Forum whose Training Sub-Committee set up a **BAF-STEP working group** to supervise the work. The members of the group were:

- **Diane Wynne Powell** (BAF's Chair) - North Beds. CVS
- **Annette Pacey** (BAF's Treasurer) - Beds. Pilgrims Housing Association
- **Tanya Richardson** - Create / Finance ReDirect
- **David Verney** - Age Concern Bedfordshire

In August 2002, BAF advertised for the post of **Project Co-ordinator** and following a clearly defined selection process, **Len Simkins** (from **FIAC – Eastern Region**) was appointed to the post. FIAC (Federation of Information and Advice Centres) was a national umbrella group for agencies in the advice and information sector – and FIAC (Eastern Region) was a BAF member. (**N.B.** In 2003 FIAC changed its name to advice^{UK}).

Even from the beginning, the structure of BAF-STEP was quite complex and involved various partnership arrangements between a number of organisations. These arrangements became even more complex as the project moved into its research, organisational support, and training/NVQ stages – and during the project various other organisations and individuals were involved:

- **Research stage** – a local company, **infotrain**, conducted the research using a team of local **research assistants**
- **Organisational support stage** – **FIAC** used a team of local **consultants** to provide the consultancy support to BAF members
- **Training programme** – a number of local, and nationally recognised **trainers**, were contracted to facilitate the training courses
- **NVQ programme** – **Quality Development Services**, a local partnership, was used as the NVQ assessment centre for the project

The relationship between the different organisations involved in the BAF-STEP project can be seen in the diagram in **Appendix 1**.

2.4 SUPERVISION OF BAF-STEP

Day to day management of the project was undertaken by the **Project Co-ordinator**, Len Simkins (from FIAC – later advice^{UK} Eastern Region).

The Project Co-ordinator reported back to BAF's **BAF-STEP working group**. During the period of the project, the Co-ordinator met 12 times with the working group and presented full update reports.

The Co-ordinator also produced summary reports at **BAF forum meetings** (on five occasions) during the project. This kept BAF members updated about developments within the project.

The work of the Project Co-ordinator, especially the financial arrangements, was also supervised by **Annette Pacey** at **Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association**, the contract holder for the project. The money for the project was paid by the LSC to BPHA. Funds were then only transferred to Bedford Advice Forum when Annette was satisfied that the targets related to the payments had been met. Annette also signed all the monthly returned forms that had to be sent to the LSC.

At the **LSC**, **Julia Brady** worked as the Contract Manager for the BAF-STEP project. Julia and the Project Co-ordinator met regularly to discuss the project and its targets and financial arrangements. During the project Julia and Len met 14 times.

2.5 TARGETS FOR BAF-STEP

2.5.1 OVERVIEW

As part of the funding arrangements with the LSC, various targets were set for the project. The targets were broken down into outputs, outcomes and milestones.

Payment of the funds was dependent on the outputs and outcomes being met, by satisfying clearly defined evidence requirements.

Monthly returns (with supporting evidence) had to be sent to the LSC to confirm the outputs, outcomes and milestones achieved.

2.5.2 FUNDING FOR 2002

In Year 1 (2002) the following **outputs** (OP1 – OP7), **outcomes** (OC1 – OC3) and **milestones** (MS1 – MS4) were set, with clearly defined evidence requirements.

Outputs

Outputs	Definition	Evidence Requirement
OP1	Recruitment of project co-ordinator	Co-ordinator contract
OP2	Recruitment of research provider	Research provider contract
OP3	Promotion of project to all BAF members	Publicity material
OP4	Research into staff development needs of BAF members	Individual reports on visits to BAF members (covering at least 10 BAF members)
OP5	Recruitment of support consultants	Consultancy contract
OP6	Development of organisational support programme	Organisational support programme
OP7	Provision of consultancy support to 25% of BAF members	Individual reports on support for BAF members (covering at least 25% of BAF members)

Outcomes

Outcomes	Definition	Evidence Requirement
OC1	Completion of project set-up – to give a structured approach to improving small business performance in the local advice sector	Initial report
OC2	Completion of research stage - to provide increased awareness of staff training and development needs in the local advice work sector	Research report
OC3	Completion of organisational support stage - to provide direct support to the local advice sector to help review training and staff development needs	Organisational support report (including training plans from at least 5 BAF members)

Milestones

Milestones	Definition	Evidence Requirement
MS1	Project start	Project contract
MS2	Completion of project set-up	Initial report
MS3	Completion of research stage	Research report
MS4	Completion of organisational support stage	Organisational support report

Due to the late start in the project (July instead of January 2002), it was very difficult to meet the agreed targets within 2002. However, by the end of 2002, the following targets had been met:

Outputs

OP1 - Recruitment of project co-ordinator

Len Simkins (from FIAC – Eastern Region) was appointed in July 2002.

OP2 - Recruitment of research provider

Infotrain was appointed in September 2002.

OP3 - Promotion of project to BAF members

An explanatory letter and a BAF-STEP publicity leaflet were sent to all BAF members in September 2002. A full presentation on the project was given at the BAF Forum meeting in October 2002.

OP4 - Research into staff development needs of BAF members

Research questionnaires were sent to all BAF members in October 2004. By the end of December 2002, 47 questionnaires had been returned. Also 22 BAF members had been visited by a research assistant (from infotrain).

OP5 - Recruitment of support consultants

Four support consultants were recruited by FIAC (Eastern Region) in December 2002.

Outcomes

OC1 - Completion of project set-up

The project set-up was completed in August 2002.

Milestones

MS1 - Project start

The project started in July 2002.

MS2 - Project set-up

The project set-up was completed in August 2002.

As some of the later targets set for 2002 had not been met (i.e. OP6 and OP7; OC2 and OC3; and MS3 and MS4), the funding that had been allocated to these outputs, outcomes and milestones was not paid.

It was therefore agreed with the LSC in late 2002 to **re-schedule the contract** for BAF-STEP and to re-allocate the under-spent funding to new targets in 2003.

2.5.3 FUNDING FOR 2003

For Year 2 (2003) another set of **outputs** (OP1 – OP4), **outcomes** (OC1 – OC4) and **milestones** (MS1 – MS6) were set, with clearly defined evidence requirements.

Outputs

Outputs	Definition	Evidence Requirement
OP1	Number of beneficiaries who attend a training course. (Target = 200)	Attendance lists, ILRs / SERs as appropriate, learner feedback
OP2	Number of beneficiaries who register for an NVQ unit. (Target = 50)	ILRs, enrolment forms
OP3	Number of beneficiaries who receive support towards an NVQ unit. (Target = 50)	ILRs, Individual Learning Plans, progress reviews, assessor visit records, EV/IV reports
OP4	Number of beneficiaries who successfully complete an NVQ unit. (Target = 50)	ILRs, Individual Learning Plans, learner portfolios, EV/IV reports

Outcomes

Outcomes	Definition	Evidence Requirement
OC1	Numbers of organisations supported, development plans produces. (Target = 12)	Company Enrolment Forms, company development plans
OC2	Completion of training programme – report and evaluation	Final report on the training programme, learner feedback and analysis
OC3	Completion of NVQ support programme – report and evaluation	Final report for NVQ programme, learner feedback and analysis, management information (including completion and achievement rates)
OC4	Project evaluation	Evaluation and a final report

Milestones

Milestones	Definition	Evidence Requirement
MS1	Completion of organisational support stage	As OC1; final report for organisational stage, feedback from companies and analysis
MS2	Beginning of training programme	Marketing materials, timetable of training sessions, attendance lists and learner details
MS3	Beginning of NVQ programme	Marketing materials, ILRs, ILPs
MS4	Completion of training programme	OC2 – final report and evaluation; learner feedback and analysis, ILR's/SER's
MS5	Completion of NVQ programme	OC3 – final report and evaluation; learner feedback and evaluation, management information, ILRs
MS6	Raising ESF awareness among organisations and individuals	Marketing materials, learner enrolment forms and feedback forms

The delays in starting the project on time, had led to certain targets not being met in 2002. This meant that this work was re-allocated to 2003, which in turn brought about severe time pressures to meet all the targets set for 2003.

As the research stage had only been started in late 2002, it was only possible to start the organisational support stage in January 2003. The original plan had been to start the training/NVQ stage after the research and organisational support stages had been fully completed. However, because of the time pressures it was decided to start the training while the organisational support work was still being conducted. Therefore the first training course was organised in March 2003.

However, despite the time pressures, 2003 was a great success for the project and almost all the targets were met. The training programme was especially successful, and, due to this, the LSC suggested re-profiling the BAF-STEP contract, in September 2002, to make sure that the success of the training programme was reflected by the funding. The revised output targets are given overleaf.

Output	Original target	Revised target
OP1 Number of beneficiaries who attend a training course	200	246
OP2 Number of beneficiaries who register for an NVQ unit	50	50
OP3 Number of beneficiaries who receive support towards an NVQ unit	50	40
OP4 Number of beneficiaries who successfully complete an NVQ unit	50	20

By the end of the project all but one of the targets (OP4) had been met – and in fact many of the targets had been exceeded.

Outputs

OP1 - Number of beneficiaries who attend a training course (246)

268 eligible beneficiaries attended training courses (March – November 2003)

OP2 - Number of beneficiaries who register for an NVQ unit (50)

Beneficiaries registered for 79 NVQ units (in June 2003).

OP3 - Number of beneficiaries who receive support towards an NVQ unit (40)

44 beneficiaries attended workshops and support sessions (June – December 2003).

OP4 - Number of beneficiaries who successfully complete an NVQ unit (20)

Beneficiaries successfully completed 12 NVQ units (in December 2003).

Outcomes

OC1 - Number of organisations supported and development plans produced (12)

14 organisations were supported and 12 training plans were produced (February – December 2003).

OC2 - Completion of training programme

The training programme was completed in November 2003.

OC3 - Completion of NVQ programme

The NVQ programme (funded through BAF-STEP) was completed in December 2003.

(**N.B.** Some candidates have continued to work on their NVQs in 2004 with extra funding provided by BAF).

OC4 - Project evaluation

Project evaluation forms were sent to BAF members in December 2003.

Milestones

MS1 - Completion of organisational support stage

The organisational support stage was completed in December 2003.

MS2 - Beginning of training programme

The training programme began in March 2003.

MS3 - Beginning of NVQ programme

The NVQ programme began in June 2003.

MS4 - Completion of training programme

The training programme was completed in November 2003.

MS5 - Completion of NVQ programme

The NVQ programme (funded by BAF-STEP) was completed in December 2003.
(**N.B.** Some candidates have continued to work on their NVQs in 2005 through funding by BAF).

MS6 - Raising ESF awareness among organisations and individuals

All BAF-STEP correspondence, reports and other documents contained the ESF logo. The ESF funding for the project was also stressed at all the training programmes and NVQ support sessions. Reports on the project were also presented to BAF members at various BAF forum meetings (January – December 2003). Publicity on the ESF funding was also distributed to all participants in the BAF-STEP programmes.

Did you know?...

This programme has been part funded by the European Union through the European Social Fund Objective 3. This fund aims to help develop employment by promoting employability, business spirit and equal opportunities, and investing human resources.

The European Social Fund Objective 3 aims to support:

- Active labour market policies, particularly
 - Improving advice and guidance, and
 - Improving access to basic skills
- Equal opportunities for all, particularly
 - Helping those with disadvantages to improve their job prospects
- Lifelong learning, particularly
 - Expanding the number of people involved, and
 - Encouraging partnerships for learning
- Adaptability and entrepreneurship, particularly
 - Updating and upgrading employee skills, and
 - Developing entrepreneurship and innovation
- Improving the role of women in the labour market, particularly
 - Promoting the chances of work for women who have been excluded from the labour market

In Bedfordshire and Luton, the Learning and Skills Council co-ordinates a large portion of European Social Funds.

If you would like to know more about the European Social Fund Objective 3 you can access the regional government office website at www.go-east.gov.uk or write to:
The Resources Team, LSC Bedfordshire and Luton, 2 Railton Road, Woburn Road Industrial Estate, Kempston, Bedfordshire, MK42 7PN.



EUROPEAN UNION
European Social Fund



Learning+Skills Council
Bedfordshire and Luton

2.5.4 EXTRA FUNDING IN 2004

In 2004 the LSC conducted a full review of the finances of its co-financing projects.

The LSC found that the target of 20 candidates for output OP4 (Number of beneficiaries who successfully complete an NVQ unit) had not been met. This meant that the project had been overpaid for that output.

However, because all the other outputs (OP1, OP2 and OP3) had been exceeded, the LSC decided to pay some extra funds because the project had been underpaid for those outputs.

The underpayment (for OP1, OP2 and OP3) was then offset against the overpayment (for OP4). This resulted in a net payment for “over-delivery” of £960. This extra funding was paid to BPHA in June 2004, and the money was then transferred to BAF.

2.6 EVALUATION OF BAF-STEP

2.6.1 OVERVIEW

The BAF-STEP project was reviewed and evaluated in various ways.

There was, of course, a **continuous review and informal evaluation** throughout the project by the following people/groups:

- The BAF-STEP working group
- The contract holder for the project (BPHA)
- The main forum of BAF members
- The Contract Manager at the LSC.

The Project Co-ordinator prepared and presented regular update reports for all of the above, and there was generally very positive feedback throughout the project.

A full evaluation of each of the BAF-STEP **training courses** was also undertaken after each course, and an evaluation of the **NVQ programme** was undertaken in December 2003. Further details of these evaluations can be found in **Additional Report 2**.

However, more formal review and evaluation of the project as a whole was undertaken in the following ways:

- Review / audit by LSC (PFA team) – February 2003
- Review by ESF review panel – June 2003
- End of project evaluation by advice^{UK} – December 2003
- Independent evaluation of LSC/ESF co-financing projects by Marketry – February 2004
- Financial review by LSC – May 2004

2.6.2 REVIEW / AUDIT BY LSC (PFA TEAM)

This review / audit took place in February 2004. The audit team met the BAF-STEP Project Co-ordinator and checked the evidence that had been presented to obtain the LSC funding each month. A review of the financial systems was also undertaken.

The auditors were very satisfied with the project. The audit report found that the use of the ESF funding had been consistent with the funding agreement, and that the project had maintained sound systems of internal control.

2.6.3 REVIEW BY ESF REVIEW PANEL

This review, which was undertaken in June 2003, looked at the following issues: quality of education and training; quality assurance and continuous improvement; equality and diversity; leadership and management; data management; and financial assurance.

The project was generally given a “green” assessment – although this was conditional on a small number of minor queries being satisfactorily resolved. These queries, which related to clarification of details regarding the outputs and outcomes, were answered by the LSC Contract Manager. The review was then successfully completed.

2.6.4 END OF PROJECT EVALUATION BY ADVUCE^{UK}

In December 2003 an evaluation questionnaire was sent to all BAF members. A copy of this project evaluation sheet can be found in **Appendix 2** of this report.

In total 37 evaluation questionnaires were returned, which gave a very respectable 71% response rate. These questionnaires were then analysed and a full evaluation report was produced. This report can be found in **Appendix 3**.

The feedback received from BAF members was extremely positive, and the vast majority of comments were complimentary. The evaluation confirmed that:

- 94% of organisations found the research visits useful
- 82% of organisations thought that the consultancy support provided was appropriate to their needs, and 91% of these organisations developed a Training Plan as a result of the support. Of these, 90% thought that the Training Plan would be beneficial to their organisation
- 93% of organisations where staff attended a BAF-STEP training course thought that the training had benefited their staff
- 100% of organisations thought that the BAF-STEP training programme was good – with 79% rating it as very good
- 100% of organisations where staff enrolled for the BAF-STEP NVQ programme thought that the programme had benefited their staff, and 100% of these organisations thought that the BAF-STEP NVQ programme was good.
- 95% of organisations thought that overall the BAF-STEP project was good – with 79% rating it as very good

2.6.5 INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF CO-FINANCING PROJECTS

The LSC appointed a consultancy company, **Marketry**, to undertake an independent evaluation of all the LSC co-financing projects.

In January 2004, an evaluation questionnaire was completed by the Project Co-ordinator, after consultation with BAF's BAF-STEP working group. Following this, Marketry conducted an evaluation interview with Project Co-ordinator in February 2004.

This evaluation was successfully completed and BAF was thanked for its extensive feedback. Markerty presented their overall findings at a dissemination event in Luton on 28/9/04. The overall findings were generally very positive, and there were no specific comments about BAF-STEP.

2.6.6 FINANCIAL REVIEW BY LSC

In May 2004, the LSC undertook a thorough financial review of all their LSC co-financing projects.

This review resulted in BAF being paid a further £960 because of "over-delivery" during the project. See **Section 2.5.4** for further information on this.

2.7 CONCLUSION

There can be no doubt that the BAF-STEP project was an enormous success.

Although this was the first time that BAF had undertaken such a major project, and the first time it had had to deal with such a large amount of funding, the final outcomes were extremely positive in many ways:

- All of the aims of the project were met
- All but one of the targets were met
- All of the project reviews and evaluations were successful and positive
- Very positive feedback was received from BAF members.

Although the project was very successful in itself, it should not be forgotten that the project brought about a considerable number of **positive benefits for BAF members and their staff:**

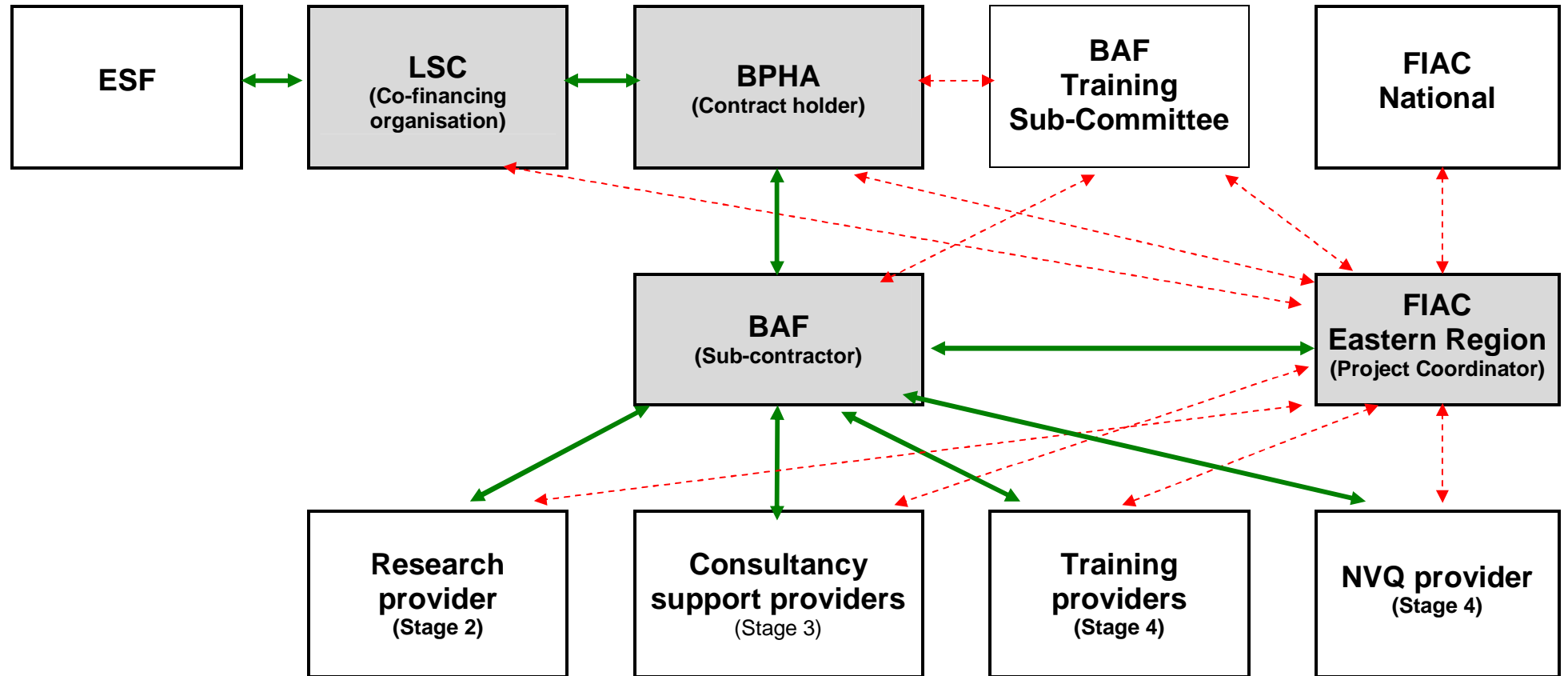
- 168 people attended **training courses** (on 289 occasions)
- 25 people were awarded the **St John Ambulance Certificate in Emergency Aid in the Workplace for Appointed Persons**
- 6 people obtained **NVQ qualifications**
- 12 BAF members produced **organisational training plans**

All of these positive benefits of the project not only helped BAF members themselves, but should also **benefit the local community** because organisations will have better trained and developed staff – and will therefore be able to provide enhanced information and advice services to the public which will help prevent social exclusion. This “**added value**” to the community means that the LSC/ESF funding was, in BAF’s opinion, money very well spent.

The success of BAF-STEP has given BAF the confidence to try to obtain further, large-scale funding to help provide training and other resources to BAF members. BAF will therefore be interested in submitting future tenders for ESF co-financing, and to other funding streams, to help organise projects to benefit BAF members.

APPENDIX 1

BAF-STEP STRUCTURE



Flow of money / Contractual arrangements



Supervision / Project management arrangements (in addition to the contractual responsibilities)

APPENDIX 2

PROJECT EVALUATION SHEET

STEP BAF

Bedford **A**dvice **F**orum **S**upported **T**raining and **E**ducation **P**roject

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE AND PROJECT EVALUATION

(A) Membership Update

Please enter details of your organisation so that BAF can update its membership records for 2004

Organisation Name*	
---------------------------	--

* If you work in a **large organisation** (e.g. a local council), please also enter your section or department name. All further references to "organisation" in this questionnaire will then relate to your "section / department".

Contact name (for BAF mailing list)	Title	First name (or initials)	Surname
Job Title			
Contact Address			
Phone Number			
Fax Number			
Email Address			

Manager's name (if different from contact name)	Title	First name (or initials)	Surname

(B) Evaluation of BAF-STEP Project

The BAF project consisted of four stages.

1. Research stage
2. Consultancy support stage
3. Training stage
4. NVQ stage

This evaluation asks for feedback on the four different stages – and then some general comments at the end.

1. Research Stage (December 2002 – February 2003)

Did your organisation receive a visit from one of BAF-STEP's researchers?

Yes No → Please go to section 2



Was the visit useful in helping you to identify your organisation's training and staff development needs?

Very useful Quite useful Not useful

Other comments on the research stage or research visit

2. Consultancy Support Stage (January – December 2003)

Did your organisation make use of the consultancy support provided by the BAF-STEP project to help develop an organisational training plan?

Yes No → Please go to section 3



Was the support provided appropriate to your organisation's needs?

Yes Partly No

Did your organisation produce a formal training and staff development plan as a result of the consultancy support provided?

Yes No

Do you think the training and development plan will be beneficial for your organisation and/or your staff?

Yes - a great deal Partly - to some extent Not sure yet No

Other comments on the consultancy support stage

3. Training Stage (March – November 2003)

Did your organisation send any staff on any of the BAF-STEP training courses?

Yes No → Please go to section 4



Did the staff who attended the course(s) benefit from the training?

Yes - a great deal Partly - to some extent Not sure yet No

What was your overall opinion of the training programme?

Very good Quite good Poor

Other comments on the training stage and courses

4. NVQ Stage (June – December 2003)

Did any of your staff enrol on the BAF-STEP NVQ programme?

Yes No → Please go to section 4



Have the staff who enrolled for an NVQ benefited from the programme?

Yes - a great deal Partly - to some extent Not sure yet No

What was your overall opinion of the NVQ programme?

Very good Quite good Poor

Other comments on the NVQ stage and programme

5. General comments

What was your overall opinion of the BAF-STEP project?

Very good Quite good Poor

Comments

Does your organisation have training or staff development needs which were not covered by the BAF-STEP project?

Yes No



Please give details

Please use the box below for any further comments you would like to make regarding the BAF-STEP Project

Comments

*Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. All information will be kept **confidential**.*

*Please put your questionnaire in the post **before Christmas** to:*

infotrain 28 Bushmead Avenue, Bedford, MK40 3QN
Tel.: 01234 360607 Fax: 01234 328707 Email: len.simkins@infotrain.co.uk

Bedford **A**dvice **F**orum **S**upported **T**raining and **E**ducation **P**roject

Co-ordinated by 

Supported by

**BEDFORD
ADVICE FORUM**
*Promoting the provision
and quality of advice services
in Mid and North Bedfordshire*



Funded by



EUROPEAN UNION Learning+Skills Council
European Social Fund
Bedfordshire and Luton



This project evaluation is being conducted on behalf of BAF-STEP by **infotrain**

APPENDIX 3

PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT

INTRODUCTION

In December 2003, at the end of the project, evaluation questionnaires were sent out to all BAF members (52). 37 questionnaires were returned, which gave a very respectable 71% response rate.

EVALUATION REPORT

1. Research Stage (December 2002 – February 2003)

Did your organisation receive a visit from one of BAF-STEP's researchers?

Yes 18 (49%) No 19 (51%)



Was the visit useful in helping you to identify your organisation's training and staff development needs? (From the 18 organisations above)

Very useful 9 (50%) Quite useful 8 (44%) Not useful 1 (6%)

Other comments on the research stage or research visit

Focussed on seeing whether staff were suitable for NVQ courses

Very friendly and helpful visits from BAF-STEP staff

Inappropriate – but only because organisation's training needs undergo annual internal review

2. Consultancy Support Stage (January – December 2003)

Did your organisation make use of the consultancy support provided by the BAF-STEP project to help develop an organisational training plan?

Yes 11 (30%) No 26 (70%)



Was the support provided appropriate to your organisation's needs?
(From the 11 organisations)

Yes 9 (82%) Partly 2 (18%) No 0 (0%)

Did your organisation produce a formal training and staff development plan as a result of the consultancy support provided? (From the 11 organisations)

Yes 10 (91%) No 1 (9%)

Do you think the training and development plan will be beneficial for your organisation and/or your staff? (From the 10 organisations above)

Yes - a great deal Partly - to some extent Not sure yet No

Other comments on the consultancy support stage

We will be able to use the Training Plan in the service review we are undergoing by supporting people.
 Consultancy support highlighted some key considerations for adding details to help us to gather relevant data for future projects.
 Training Plan will be a useful planning tool and also helps us to comply with SQM requirements.

3. Training Stage (March – November 2003)

Did your organisation send any staff on any of the BAF-STEP training courses?

Yes No



Did the staff who attended the course(s) benefit from the training?

(From the 29 organisations above)

Yes - a great deal Partly - to some extent Not sure yet No

What was your overall opinion of the training programme?

(From the 29 organisations above)

Very good Quite good Poor

Other comments on the training stage and courses

Training programme covered a wide variety of subjects – there was something for everybody – managers, advisers and admin staff.
 Some advanced IT courses would have benefited some of our staff.
 Very good variety of courses.
 The courses were well run, topical and very relevant to my role.
 One of my staff attended a session on facilitating training and used her learning to re-vamp our volunteer induction training programme.
 Thank you. We found all training to be of a very high standard.
 We booked a few dates but, unfortunately, were unable to attend. Other dates were not suitable, but there were courses of interest.
 You fitted us all in. We were delighted. Thank you.
 Course information was sent out at short notice, difficult for a small team of part-timers to accommodate. Fortunately all courses were local and we had insider information!
 More!

4. NVQ Stage (June – December 2003)

Did any of your staff enrol on the BAF-STEP NVQ programme?

Yes No



Have the staff who enrolled for an NVQ benefited from the programme?

(From the 5 organisations above)

Yes – a great deal Partly – to some extent Not sure yet No

What was your overall opinion of the NVQ programme?

(From the 5 organisations above)

Very good Quite good Poor

Other comments on the NVQ stage and programme

Not enough time to complete the programme. Happy to have made a start.
Regretfully, there wasn't sufficient time to complete whole NVQ programme.

5. General comments

What was your overall opinion of the BAF-STEP project?

Very good Quite good Poor No Answer

Comments

Not a lot of contact from our organisation, but on-going information etc. useful.

Excellent support for BAF members – free of charge

A lot was achieved in such a short time. To have done it justice more time was required. However, what was achieved was very beneficial to those who do not have big training budgets. Having had no data on our training it has been very beneficial to consider what we have already achieved and to document this. Establishing our future goals has enabled us to consider our best way forward. A good base has been established.

Great support for the local voluntary sector.

It is a pity the funding has come to an end. This was an excellent source for the voluntary sector to access staff training.

Excellent, well run project on development and training for the voluntary sector. Hope future funding can be found to continue the work started by BAF-STEP.

Good value for money / free!!

Access to training made easy.

A fantastic opportunity to engage in some high quality training offered at little or not cost – very important for voluntary organisations.

I had limited contact with the more intensive work undertaken with whole organisations, but we know from one applicant organisation that this proved helpful to them.

Organisation seemed a bit haphazard, but courses were good.

Reported to Committee and AP Officers Group of success

Does your organisation have training or staff development needs which were not covered by the BAF-STEP project?

Yes 14 (38%) No 23 (62%)



Please give details

Intermediate and/or advanced IT courses

Maybe more advanced IT courses would have been of benefit

CAD training for our surveyor

We have missed the usual BAF courses e.g. Benefits Updates while the BAF-STEP programme has been running.

Dealing with victims of domestic violence.

Working with children who have witnessed or experienced abuse.

Specific to child protection and associated issues – we have developed our own volunteer development training programme.

Sex offenders course.

Basic counselling skills.

Preparing the training plan showed up the need for training in staff appraisals for the Management Committee and coaching skills for staff.

Specialised training for our client group.

We employ over 1,000 staff at 7 sites. It might have been helpful, however, for the staff responsible for the bursary side of our work to have discussed potential training requirements re benefits etc.

We need more IT technical knowledge. Computer 'trouble shooting' would be invaluable to us.

IT literacy.

Benefits training.

Further courses would be good – we were unable to attend the Training for trainers course and would like to if more are arranged.

Further comments regarding the BAF-STEP Project

Comments

A big thank you for a job well done. Don't stop now.

We particularly appreciated the CPAG courses in Tax Credits and Pension Credit.

BAF-STEP was able to reach voluntary organisations with low budgets. This enabled volunteers to facilitate training and personal development for their staff. Opportunity to learn much more about statutory and voluntary organisations.

We have found the support very helpful in giving us a clearer focus and hope to work again with BAF to enable us to continue to develop our organisation and workforce. Thank you.

I really benefited from the BAF-STEP training I attended.

Very good series of training programmes, well administered by friendly helpful team. Thank you.

BAF-STEP has been very informative and helped me to identify gaps in the training we have received.

BAF-STEP provided positive training in areas where there was a need at the time i.e. tax credits, pension credit and first aid.

Excellent!

New to this post and unable to comment.

Long may it continue.

We did not use BAF-STEP as our training is catered for by our Central Office.

We would always be interested in any future training available. Thank you.

CONCLUSION

The feedback from BAF members about BAF-STEP was extremely positive.

- 94% of organisations that received a visit during the research stage found the visit useful
- 82% of organisations that received consultancy support during the organisational support stage thought that that the support provided was appropriate to their needs.
- 91% of organisations that received consultancy support during the organisational support stage developed a Training Plan as a result of that support.
- 90% of organisations that produced a Training Plan thought that the plan would be beneficial to their organisation
- 93% of organisations where staff attended a BAF-STEP training course thought that the training had benefited their staff
- 100% of organisations thought that the BAF-STEP training programme was good – with 79% rating it as very good
- 100% of organisations where staff enrolled for the BAF-STEP NVQ programme thought that the programme had benefited their staff
- 100% of organisations thought that the BAF-STEP NVQ programme was good – with 40% rating it as very good
- 95% of organisations thought that overall the BAF-STEP project was good – with 79% rating it as very good

The vast majority of comments made on the evaluation sheets were very positive. There were only a small number of negative comments – mainly about the administration of the training programme.

APPENDIX 4

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of Bedford Advice Forum, advice^{UK} would like to thank all the people and organisations who helped during the various stages of the project.

Research stage

The **administrative work** stage was undertaken by **infotrain**. Thanks go to:

- **Len Simkins** – co-ordination and supervisory work
- **Sue Walmsley** – administrative support and analysis of the questionnaires
- **Mary Jurance** – administrative support and work on the IT training needs research

The team of **research assistants** used by infotrain for the research visits were:

- **Jean Barber**
- **Lizzie Collman**
- **Noor D'Agostino**
- **Linda Noble**
- **Len Simkins**
- **Cheryl Subocz**

Thanks also go to:

- The 49 organisations that sent back **research questionnaires**
- The 27 organisations that had BAF-STEP **research visits**
- The 24 organisations that replied to **the IT training needs questionnaires**

Organisational support stage

The **administrative work** was undertaken by **advice^{UK}**. Thanks go to:

- **Len Simkins** – co-ordination and supervisory work
- **Sue Walmsley** – administrative support
- **Andrew Foster** – help in designing the template for BAF-STEP Training Plans

The team of **consultants** used by advice^{UK} for the organisational support stage were:

- **Andrew Foster**
- **Tanya Richardson**
- **Len Simkins**
- **Julian Stell**

Thanks also go to:

- The 14 organisations that took part in the **organisational support stage** of the project
- The 12 organisations that **completed a staff training and development plan** using a BAF-STEP template

Training / NVQ stage

The **administrative work** for the training programme was undertaken by **advice^{UK}**. Thanks go to:

- **Len Simkins** – co-ordination and supervisory work
- **Mary Jurance** – various support and assistance in planning and organising the training programme
- **Sue Walmsley** – administrative support, analysis of course evaluation sheets, and work on training report
- **Tanya Richardson** – assistance in planning the training programme
- **Liz Davies** – assistance in planning the training programme

The **tutors** used on the training programme were:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Les Annal | • Tanya Richardson |
| • Edward Graham | • Ashley Riley |
| • Marjorie Harris-Bell | • Len Simkins |
| • Steve Johnson | • Louise Shepherd |
| • Colin Leck | • David Simmons |
| • Pam McNay | • Geoff Willis |

The **assessment centre** activities for the NVQ programme were undertaken by **Quality Development Services**. Thanks go to:

- **Len Simkins** – programme co-ordination and candidate support work
- **Julian Stell** – candidate support work and candidate assessment
- **Liz Davies** – internal verifier for the BAF-STEP NVQ programme
- **Tanya Richardson** – candidate observation and assessment
- **Jean Barber** – candidate observation and assessment

Thanks also go to:

- The **39 BAF organisations** that sent participants on the training programme
- The **168 participants** who attended courses
- The **7 BAF organisations** that sent candidates on the NVQ programme
- The **10 candidates** who registered for the NVQ programme
- The **6 candidates** who successfully complete at least one NVQ unit
- The **staff at the training venues** (especially **Rachel Gurney**, at Bunyan Meeting Free Church), who helped the training courses run so smoothly.
- **Teri Whittaker and Len Simkins** – for taking photos at training sessions

General acknowledgements

We would also like to thank various people and organisations who helped throughout the project – and, in fact, without their help it is unlikely that the project would have succeeded:

- **Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association** who agreed to act as the contract holder for the contract with the LSC – and especially **Annette Pacey** who supervised BAF-STEP's financial arrangements and payments
- The members of **BAF's BAF-STEP working group** who provided much-needed supervision and support throughout the project
 - **Diane Wynne Powell** (BAF's Chair) - North Beds. CVS
 - **Annette Pacey** (BAF's Treasurer) - Beds. Pilgrims Housing Association
 - **Tanya Richardson** - Create / Finance ReDirect
 - **David Verney** - Age Concern Bedfordshire
- **Julia Brady**, Contract Manager at **Bedfordshire and Luton Learning and Skills Council**, for ongoing supervision and support for the project and the Project Co-ordinator.

Len Simkins, the **Project Co-ordinator** would also like to thank:

- **Steve Johnson**, Chief Executive of **advice^{UK}**, for agreeing to FIAC (later adviceUK) becoming involved in the project
- Everybody at **infotrain** for giving great support, and for showing such great patience with me, during this massive project. Thanks to **Sue, Mary** – and **Susannah**.