



## Co-investing in Workforce Development: Outcomes from the Collective Learning Fund Pilots

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## The need for co-investment in lifelong learning

“Things work best...where all parties invest in learning. A society where everyone recognises that they have a stake in learning, and where there are collective as well as individual returns, will produce high rates of investment in it”.

Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning  
(2010)



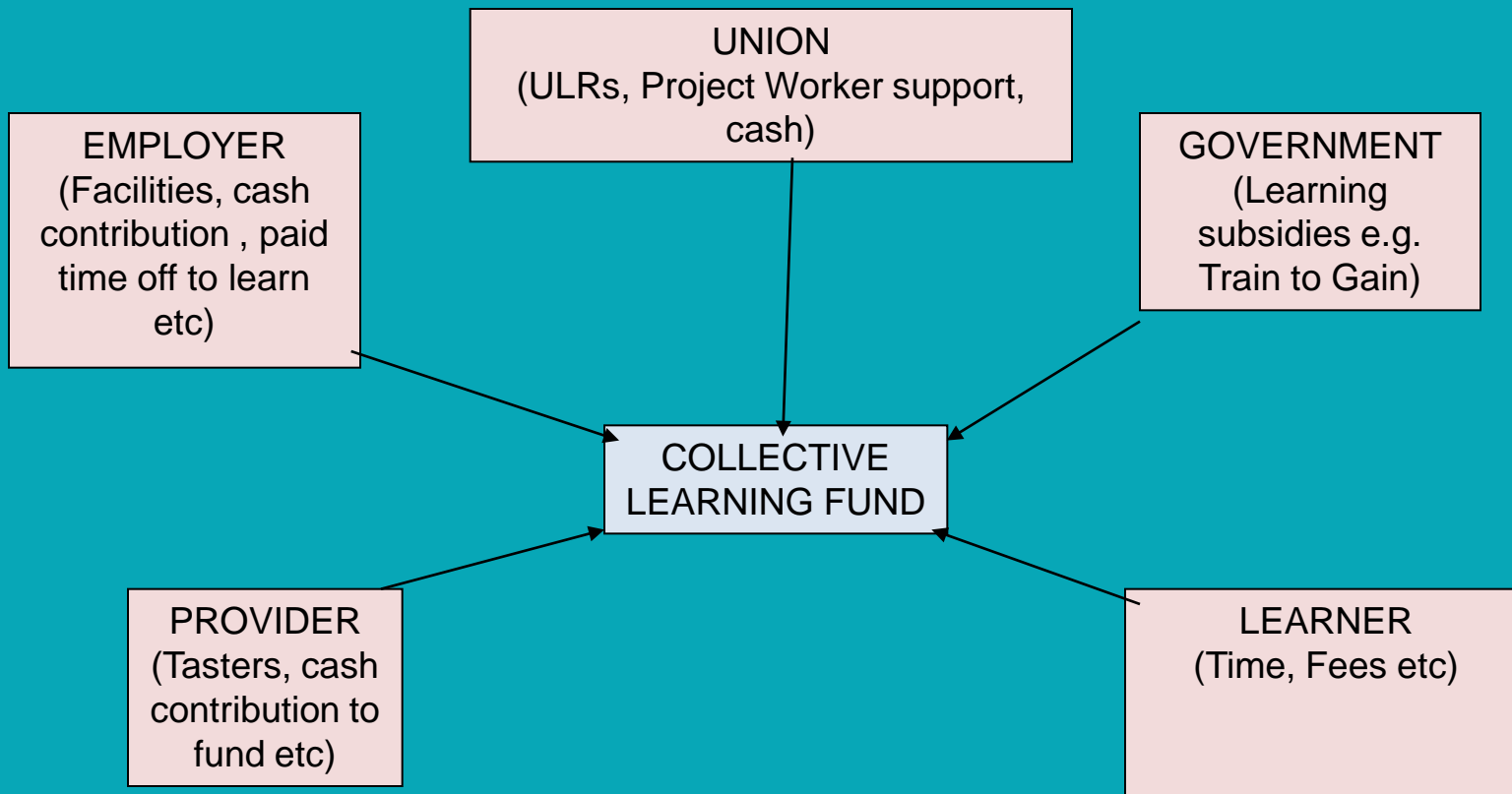
## The shifting balance of funding

- The cuts in the government learning and skills budget will mean that employers and individuals will be expected to make increased contributions to the funding of learning
- Many employees are willing to invest more in their personal development (e.g. study time) provided that the employer makes a contribution
- Negotiating the level and type of pooled contributions is best done collectively through a framework involving unions, employers and providers



## What are CLFs ?

- **Collective Learning Funds are union-led initiatives to stimulate co-investment in the personal development of the workforce to make such learning affordable and accessible**
- **They are not just about putting cash into an account to pay for learning. The concept is much wider, including in-kind contributions such as time and learning facilities.**





## Government commitment

- **“Collective learning funds would encourage joint employer-union initiatives to increase the scope of training and development opportunities for their workforce and to commit new investment to this. In addition, these funds could encourage employees to co-invest their time along with the employer in a wider range of non job-specific training and development”.**

*Leitch Review of Skills 2006*



## CLF project: stage two

- **DIUS agreed to extend project- funded through ULF- July 2008- July 2010**
- **15 pilots in NW**
- **8 pilots in East Midlands**
- **£4,000 kick- start for each pilot**
- **2 designated project workers**
- **Evaluation report June 2010**



## Distribution of pilots

	Private	Public
• Transport	7	1
• National/Local Govt	0	6
• Manufacturing	3	0
• Distribution	2	0
• Construction	1	0
• Call centre	1	0
• Retail	1	0
• Communications	0	1
• TOTAL	15	8



## Types of pilot

- Different types of funding arrangements, with different combinations of partners
- Single site- 13 pilots
- Multi site (usually single employer)- 8 pilots
- Sector funds (retail and taxi cases) covering a variety of sites- 2 pilots
- 9 lead unions with 2 pilots involving a multi- union arrangement and 2 involving collaboration between 2 unions.

## Types of contribution

- 20 had “in - kind” contributions from employers
- 8 received cash contributions from employers
- 1 received no employer contribution – with the union contributing £10,000
- 6 pilots negotiated cash contributions from colleges (based on course completions)
- 2 pilots negotiated “free “ courses from colleges
- CLFs made learning affordable – subsidising courses or individuals or providing loans.



## Outputs

- **2,719 learning episodes: 721 Skills for Life; 527 ICT; and 587 wider/personal development**
- **5 new learning centres**
- **9 learning committees established/updated**
- **20 had in-kind contributions, 8 received cash contributions from employers; plus contributions from colleges.**



## Benefits of a CLF

- **Employees:** more confidence to take up learning and access wider learning opportunities
- **Employers:** “soft outcomes” improvements in morale of workforce; reduced absence; better customer service; improved employee engagement ;better employer-union relations
- **Government:** catalyst to employers to offer workforce training Level 2, Skills for Life, Train to Gain, informal adult learning
- **Unions:** increased visibility and presence in workplace ; demonstrates union added value to employers



## What they say about CLFs

- “ People’s confidence is lifted and morale is better. People are more positive about the union and value their certificates”
- Mark Chantler, ULR Unite, Argos Distribution
- “The CLF has supported the growth of investment in people development. The fund has provided our “Learn 4 U” centre with a great foundation and with the ability to strengthen the learning agenda on site for the future”
- Loretta Smith, HR Business Partner, McVities



## What they say about CLFs

**“ The CLF has shown a positive working relationship between employer and union which has been a great benefit to all staff”**

**Graham Peck, Lead ULR PCS Lincolnshire**

**“The CLF project has enabled a positive way to work alongside the union instead of being on opposing sides. For once we are working together on the same agenda”**

**Sue Randall HR Manager, Caledonian Building Systems Ltd**



## Challenges

- **What scope is there for CLFs to help fund wider personal development and part-time routes through higher education?**
- **How can unions, particularly their union learning representatives, best provide front-line information and advice to union members to take up and benefit from learning opportunities opened up through CLFs and how can this relate to skills accounts?**
- **How can the exercise of the right to request training be used to access learning opened up by CLFs.**



## Challenges

- What scope is there for CLFs to be opened up to non employees and for ULRs to work with community learning champions to help such learners take up courses?
- How can CLFs be used to lever in employer contributions to any future “save to earn” and “borrow to learn” schemes such as personal learning accounts?
- How can CLFs give transparency to learner and employer time contribution and lead to transactions over such time mediated through unions?



## Further information

**“Evaluation of Stage 2 of the Collective Learning Fund Project”**

**“Making Learning Affordable- Setting up Collective Learning Funds: a Toolkit for Trade Unions”**

**<http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/>**