EVALUATION OF INSPIRING FE GOVERNANCE 2020/21

A report prepared for the Education and Training Foundation by ICF Consulting Services Ltd

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report presents the findings from an independent evaluation of the Inspiring FE Governance Programme in 2020/21. The Inspiring FE Governance programme provides a matching service where volunteers can apply for governance vacancies advertised by FE colleges. The programme is delivered by Education and Employers, which already provides a similar service for the schools sector.

The evaluation was commissioned by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) and conducted by ICF Consulting Services Ltd. It assesses the delivery of the programme and the outcomes and impact of the programme in increasing the pool of governors entering FE roles and helping providers to address Governor skills shortages and gaps. It draws on the following research:

− Semi-structured telephone interviews with 7 volunteers that became Governors as a result of the programme
− Telephone interviews with 6 Governance Professionals that registered with the service to recruit new Governors
− An online survey of Governance Professionals that accessed the programme
− Interviews with the programme delivery partner

The research was conducted between February and May 2021.

Key findings
Delivery of the programme

− The project achieved close to its target of recruiting volunteers, with 49 placed in Governance roles in an FE institution against a target of 50. The delivery partner reported the main challenge in achieving the target was in matching volunteers to the providers. They felt they had sufficient volunteers but they did not always have the specific skills needs that providers wanted for particular Governor roles. The problems were greatest in rural and coastal areas where there were fewer local volunteers to meet provider needs.

− A high proportion of providers have signed up for the programme. By the end of March 2021 there were 244 FE providers that had registered on the system to identify prospective Governors. This included 86% of all FE colleges in England (201 out of 234) as well as 43 independent training providers. The delivery partner believed however that many of these providers were not regular users of the tool, although it did not collect data on usage to corroborate this.

- There was a relatively strong throughput of volunteers. The delivery partner estimated that around 1,500 volunteers expressed an interest in the programme throughout 2020/21. The characteristics of volunteers are also diverse, with 25% of the volunteers that entered governance roles from ethnic minority communities (higher than the 14% of people in England and Wales that were from ethnic minority communities). Additionally, nearly half (53%) of matched volunteers being under 35, which differs from the current perception of Governance boards containing a high proportion of older individuals and those that have retired.

- Volunteers were most commonly from a finance background. These comprised 26% of all volunteers that gained Governance roles in FE institutions There was also a high proportion of participants from a Science, Technology, Engineering and Manufacturing (STEM) background (10%). These were areas where Governance Professionals reported a high level of demand for skills.

- All the Governance Professionals reported signing up for the programme because they had difficulty filling Governor vacancies. Some of the Governance Professionals reported using the matching service to recruit Governors with specific skillsets which they have generally had difficulties in attracting. A few Governance Professionals also reported using the service to increase the diversity of their Governance board, which included recruiting more younger Governors or a wider mix of ethnicities or genders.

- There was also evidence that the service provides volunteers interested in becoming Governors in FE with a focal point for accessing information and governance opportunities. Most of the volunteers stated they would not have looked for governance vacancy in local providers and the programme website appears to come near the top of engine searches on governance in FE.

- The online matching system received reasonably positive feedback. In the survey, around two-thirds (61%) of respondents found the online matching system easy or very easy to use. However, a relatively high proportion (20%) found it difficult or very difficult to use. Some suggested areas of improvement included providing automatic alerts when volunteers have received a message or when a new volunteer has been registered on the system. It was also suggested that volunteers should be able to specify a radius where they were willing to become Governors and are automatically removed from the system once they are no longer looking for governance vacancies.

- Governance Professionals had mixed views on whether the programme met their expectations. Around half of survey respondents (44%) slightly or strongly agreed that the matching service had met their expectations. However, over a third (37%) slightly or strongly disagreed. These differences in views largely related to whether providers had been able to fill Governor vacancies through the service. Nearly all of those that did fill the Governor roles felt the programme had met their expectations. Those that did not fill vacancies were largely dissatisfied with the programme.

Outcomes and impact

- The programme has largely been successful in recruiting new FE Governors, as most of the volunteers engaged by the programme would not have considered working in

FE governance without the programme. Many of the volunteers that were interviewed reported that they did not initially consider working in FE governance when they signed up for the service as they were initially interested in being a Governor at a school. Some also stated they were not aware of FE until they attended events run by the delivery partner. There was also a sense that the programme website quickly enabled volunteers to identify a route to becoming an FE Governor as it appeared prominently on search engines.

- There is evidence of provider demand for more than the 49 volunteers that were placed in governance roles in FE in 2020-21. In the survey around half of respondents stated that they had not filled governance roles through the programme. However, around half (44%) of survey respondents felt the matching service was an effective or very effective tool for recruiting Governors. A relatively large proportion (34%) offered no opinion, which were most likely to be Governance Professionals that had not yet used the system to recruit Governors.

- Most of the FE providers who had placed Governors, thought the matching service enabled them to find Governors with the right skills and expertise. Among survey respondents that had recruited Governors through the programme, 80% slightly or strongly agreed that the matching service had enabled them to find Governors with the right skills and expertise for their organisation. Only 15% were dissatisfied with the Governors they recruited through the programme. This was corroborated in the qualitative interviews, with most Governance Professionals impressed with the calibre of the new Governors they recruited through the programme.

- Volunteers are largely satisfied in their role, and have the opportunity, motivation and capability to make changes. Most were also felt to be able to communicate effectively with their fellow Governors, although this has been slightly limited at present due to most board meetings taking place remotely.

- Some providers were already able to describe tangible changes the organisation made as a result of the Governors they recruited from the programme. However, for others it was too early to identify change, as the new Governors were still developing their understanding of their organisation and the FE sector.

- It is too early to identify tangible organisational impacts from the programme. However, many of the conditions appear to be in place for impact as the programme has improved the skills mix of governance boards and the new Governors feel they are able to apply their skills and experience.

- The programme appears to provide Governance placements at a relatively low cost, with the cost per new Governor (excluding deadweight) estimated to be between £1,200 - £1,500.

Conclusions and recommendations

The evaluation found the programme appears to play an important role in the FE landscape. For volunteers, it provides a focal point for individuals to learn more about becoming a Governor in FE and then to apply for roles across a range of providers. There is a risk that without the programme, volunteers may not be able to easily identify

information on how to become a Governor in FE, which could deter some from entering the sector. For providers, the high proportion (86%) of college in the sector has signed up to the programme indicates there is a high demand for services to find suitable governors to meet each college's required appointment criteria

There are however areas where the delivery of the programme could be improved. This includes minor changes to the matching system as well as improvements to promotion of the service and data collected. The evaluation therefore identified the following recommendations:

1. The DfE and ETF should continue to invest in the online tool for directing volunteers to Governance roles in FE.
2. The delivery partner should be funded to make improvements to the online system,
3. The delivery partner to be funded to undertake targeted recruitment in areas where volunteers are under-represented.
4. The ETF and its partners to undertake more systematic promotion of the service through their existing networks.
5. The ETF to collect regular (e.g. quarterly) from the delivery partner more systematic information on the characteristics of volunteers.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings from an evaluation of the Inspiring FE Governance programme for 2020/21. The evaluation was conducted by ICF Consulting Services Limited, drawing on desk research, qualitative interviews and a participant survey conducted between February and May 2021.

1.1   Background and context

Within FE there is a constant need to maintain a diverse Governance board to reflect the needs of local communities and modern industry skills needs and practices. However, The FE sector has traditionally experienced challenges in recruiting a diverse range of individuals to Governance roles.

The demand for Governors is only likely to increase in the future, as recent reforms proposed in the FE White Paper *Skills for Job: Lifelong learning for Opportunity and Growth* proposes reforms that recommend a wide-ranging set of skills required for board members and regular reviews on Governance to ensure it remains current. The White Paper also aims to increase the diversity of FE senior leaders and boards of Governors, noting that *"Those from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds made up only 4% of college leaders in 2018".*

1.2   Inspiring FE Governance programme

The **Inspiring FE Governance (IFEG) programme** aims to address these issues by recruiting new volunteers to serve on the governing boards. It is a matching service whereby the supplier matches volunteers with the requisite skills and expertise to FE Governor vacancies on college boards. Work comprises:

− Recruitment of colleges and independent training providers (ITPs) that have governance vacancies
− Promotion of the FE Governor role to relevant skilled volunteers.

The programme has been running for three years over which it has been delivered by Education and Employers. The budget for the project is around £60,000 ex VAT, but the delivery partner is able to leverage economies of scale because they deliver a similar DfE funded recruitment programme for school Governors. The programme was originally due to close at the end of March 2021 but the DfE has recently agreed to continue to provide the ETF to fund the programme in 2021/22.

The delivery partner primarily recruited Governance Professionals in FE providers to advertise their vacancies on the matching service. Volunteers are then invited to post their profiles on the system and apply for any vacancies which they are interested in. Governance Professionals can also view the profiles of volunteers and reach out to them directly.

1.3   Aim of the evaluation

The aim of the evaluation is to:

− Assess the effectiveness of the delivery of the programme, including what worked well and what could be improved.
− Examine the impact of the programme on the quantity and quality of new governors recruited to FE providers. This will help the ETF understand the returns on their programme investment.

An analytical framework and research tools were produced after scoping research into the programme. These are included in Annex 1 and 2. An interim report produced at the end of March presented the early findings from the evaluation. This report presents the overall findings from the Inspiring FE Governance evaluation research.

1.4   Research methodology

The evaluation for IFEG draws on the following primary research tasks:

- **Semi-structured telephone interviews with 7 volunteers** that became Governors as a result of the programme (target 6). The interviews examined Governor perceptions of the matching service, their extent to which they would have considered governance in FE without the programme, and the skills and experiences they brought to their Governor boards.
- **Telephone interviews with 6 Governance Professionals** (target 6) that signed up for the programme. These interviews examined Governance Professionals views on the needs of the programme, where it has been effective in addressing recruitment challenges in their Governance board and the benefits this has brought to governance in their institution.
- **An online survey of Governance Professionals** that accessed the programme to examine wider perceptions about the value and impact of the programme. The survey commenced at the start of May and ran for three weeks. The survey received 41 responses from a population of 236 Governance Professionals (excluding 18 emails which bounced), which gives a response rate of 17%. This included a relatively even mix of providers that had recruited Governors through the programme and those that had not. It also included providers from a mix of regions, with each England region contributing between 8% and 15% of the total number of responses.
- **Interviews with the programme director in the delivery partner** , to examine their views on what worked well and what could be improved.
- **Analysis of programme data on take up and access to the online portal**. This data was provided by the delivery partner.

1.5   Limitations of the research

The following factors have limited some of the research possible in the study:

- The qualitative interviews with volunteers is based on a relatively small set of interviews (6) and therefore any extrapolation of the findings to represent all volunteers should be viewed with caution.
- Data on the location of volunteers that had registered on the system was not available and therefore it was not possible to examine the geographical spread. This information has instead been collected from the qualitative interviews with Governance Professionals and the delivery partner.

1.6   Structure of the report

The report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** examines the delivery of the programme to date, including the performance against target, the characteristics and coverage of volunteers and providers signing up to the service, as well as their perceptions on the value and quality of the support provided

- **Chapter 3** presents the outcomes and impacts of the programme. This specifically examines the extent to which the programme has brought new skills and experiences to Governance boards, and its impact on helping FE providers alleviate governance skills shortages and gaps.
- **Chapter 4** presents the conclusions and recommendations from the study

2. DELIVERY OF THE PROGRAMME

This chapter explores the delivery of the matching service, including volunteer engagement and demand, the effectiveness and quality of delivery and management.

2.1   Promotion of the programme

2.1.1 Engagement of volunteers

To recruit volunteers, Education and Employers promoted the programme to various employers and professional bodies. This included:

- Engaging with and sending regular communications promoting governance to professional bodies such as the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, Institution of Civil Engineers and the Institute of Risk Management.
- Providing promotion materials for the internal HR systems at government bodies and corporate organisations such as Henry Boot, HMRC, Department for Education, Armed Forces, Barclays and Vodafone.
- Presenting information on the programme to employers and conferences such as the Health Education England volunteering conference.
- Running targeted promotional campaigns, such as the Everyone on Board campaign (promoted through organisations like the Black Young Professionals Network and the Civil Service Race Forum) and the Educators on Board campaign (promoted through organisations like the DfE and SET).

The promotion of Governance in FE was conducted alongside promotion of Governance in schools, as the delivery partner is also contracted by the DfE to deliver a Governor matching service for schools. They felt this brought substantial economies of scale. They also reported that without taking this approach they would have difficulty in delivering promotional events for prospective Governors for FE as there is no specific funding for this in their contract with the ETF.

The delivery partner felt these activities provided a strong throughput of volunteers. They estimated that around 1,500 volunteers expressed an interest in the programme throughout 2020/21, after attending programme events.

2.1.2 Engagement of providers

Providers were encouraged to sign up to the programme through presentations at provider events. Additionally, the programme was also promoted by the ETF through its newsletter and the AoC through its events.

The delivery partner also provided regular reminders to providers that signed up for the programme to encourage them to use the matching system. They noted that this was important as the volunteers on the system frequently change and providers need to log in to find new candidates.

The delivery partner reported strong initial interest in the programme but noted that a high proportion of providers do not use the system regularly. They noted that there was potential to expand the promotion undertaken by the ETF and AoC to address this . They also reported that in the 2020/21 contract year there could have been some overlap between the programme and the bespoke governor recruitment service funded by the DfE and provided by Peridot and the Governance recruitment support service offered on a paid for basis by the AoC, which could be confusing providers.

2.2 Recruitment against plan

2.2.1 Volunteers

The project achieved close to its target of recruiting volunteers, with **49** placed in Governance roles in an FE institution against a target of 50. The majority of these placements was achieved in the last three months of the programme.

The delivery partner reported the main challenge in achieving the target was in matching volunteers to the providers. They felt they had sufficient volunteers but they did not always have the specific skills needs that providers wanted for particular Governor roles. The problems were greatest in rural and coastal areas where there were fewer local volunteers to meet provider needs.

The pandemic was not reported to have had a negative impact on the recruitment of volunteers. The delivery partner reported that the throughput of volunteers was in line with previous years. Rather, some interviewees posited that the shift to online meetings made it more feasible for volunteers to take on Governor roles further away from their home, and one of the volunteers we interviewed also reported that as a result of only having online meetings they felt they could undertake a governance role in a college as well as a school.

2.2.2 Providers

A relatively high volume of providers signed up to the programme. By the end of March 2021 there were 244 FE providers that had registered on the system to identify prospective Governors. This included 86% of all FE colleges in England (201 out of 234[1]) as well as 43 independent training providers (see Table 1).

The delivery partner did not have data on the extent to which providers used the system, such as dates of the last login, number of logins in the last month, etc. Consequently, it is not possible to identify the proportion of providers that are 'active' users. However, the delivery partner felt this was likely to be a high proportion of the providers.

Table 1. Type of FE provider registered

Type of education provider	Number of providers signed up	Percentage of total
FE colleges	201	86%
Independent Training Providers	43	18%

Source: Programme MI (n=244)

2.3 Volunteer characteristics

2.3.1 Volunteer demographics

There was a relatively diverse mix of volunteers that had been recruited through the programme. Data collected by the delivery partner shows that 25% of the volunteers that entered governance roles were from ethnic minority communities (see Table 2). This is higher than the 14% of people in England and Wales[2] that were from ethnic minority communities. It is also higher than the proportion of ethnic minorities working in FE colleges (around 10%).

---

[1] Based on AoC data available at: https://www.aoc.co.uk/about-colleges/research-and-stats/key-further-education-statistics
[2] 2011 Census, Office of National Statistics

Table 2. Inspiring Further Education Governors by Ethnicity, 2020/21

Type of education provider	Number of providers signed up
White British	71%
Asian/Asian British	15%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	4%
Mixed/multiple	5%
White – other	4%
Other	1%
Prefer not to say	1%
TOTAL	**100%**

Source: Programme MI

The programme also engaged a relatively high proportion of younger adults. As shown in Figure 1, nearly half (53%) of matched volunteers were under 35, and the vast majority (73%) were under 50. This differs from the current perception of Governance boards containing a high proportion of older individuals and those that have retired.

Figure 1. Inspiring Further Education Governors by Age, 2020/21

■ 18-25 ■ 26-35 ■ 36-50 ■ 50+ ■ Not known ■ Rather not say
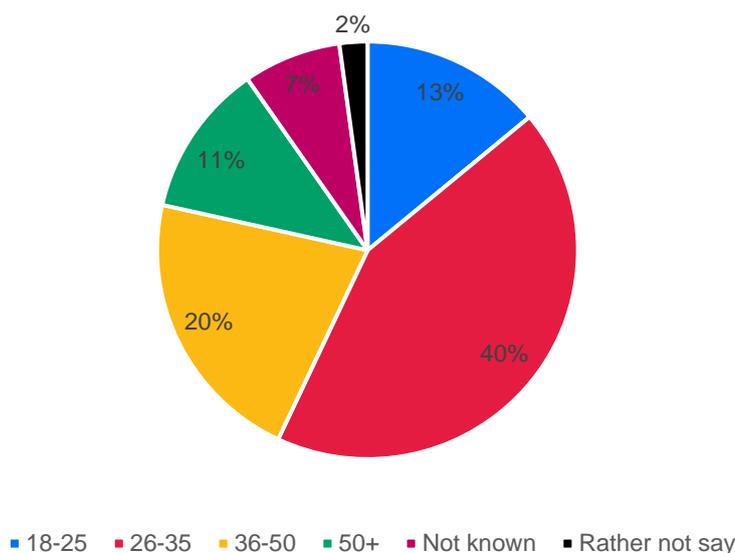
Source: Programme MI

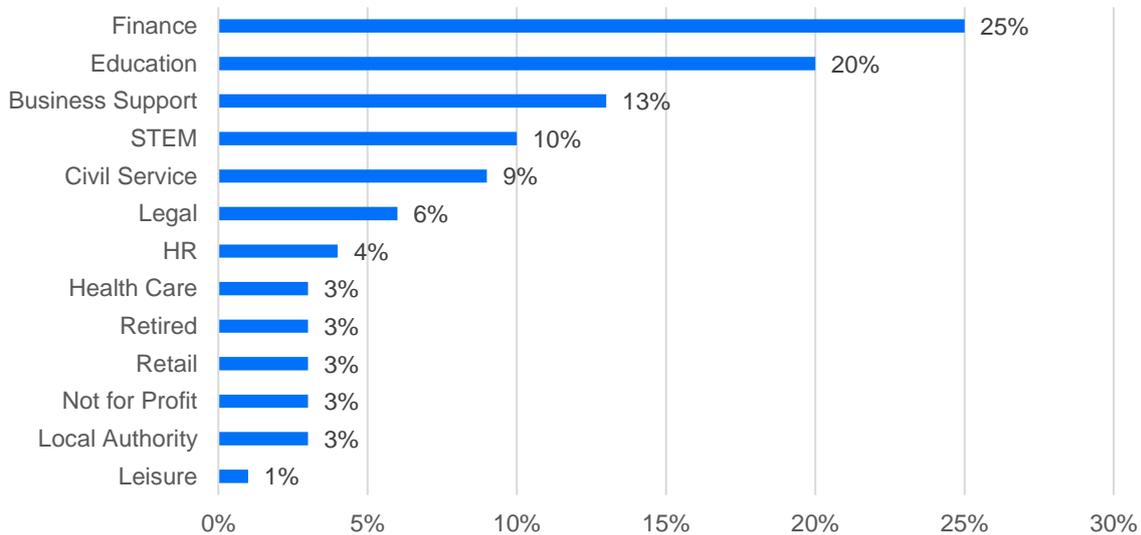### 2.3.2   Volunteer employment/skills background

As shown in Figure 2, volunteers that gained Governance roles in FE institutions were most commonly from a finance or education background. This is unsurprising as from the qualitative interviews Governance Professionals reported high demand for finance skills among Governors so they could provide effective oversight of the organisation's finances and audit. Additionally, volunteers with an education background are also more likely to be interested in becoming a Governor.

There was also a high proportion of participants from a Science, Technology, Engineering and Manufacturing (STEM) background (10%). This was also an area where Governance Professionals reported a high level of demand for skills, as many deliver a

diverse range of STEM courses.

A relatively high proportion of volunteers were from the Civil Service and local authorities. This most likely reflects that the delivery partner undertook some targeted marketing within Government departments and public sector employers.

Figure 2. Inspiring FE Governance volunteers by industry

Industry	Percentage
Finance	25%
Education	20%
Business Support	13%
STEM	10%
Civil Service	9%
Legal	6%
HR	4%
Health Care	3%
Retired	3%
Retail	3%
Not for Profit	3%
Local Authority	3%
Leisure	1%

Source: Programme MI

2.4   Motivations for participating in the programme
2.4.1   FE providers
All the Governance Professionals reported signing up for the programme because they had difficulty filling Governor vacancies. This was attributed to:

- Competition from schools for individuals to become Governors
- A lack of awareness or understanding among individuals about the FE sector
- Prospective Governors having limited time to participate, particularly when they have another job

Some Governance Professionals whose institutions were based outside large conurbations also reported a relatively small pool of individuals to recruit from. This limited their opportunity to recruit a diverse mix of Governors.

Some of the Governance Professionals reported using the matching service to recruit Governors with specific skillsets which they have generally had difficulties in attracting, including individuals with knowledge of technical subjects that the provider delivers a lot of provision in (e.g. engineering) or in areas such as finance and audit. A few Governance Professionals also reported using the service to increase the diversity of their Governance board, which included more younger Governors or a wider mix of ethnicities or genders.

Similar findings were identified in the Governance Professionals survey. Over half (56%) of the respondents stated that their organisation used the matching service to find candidates with specific skills (see Figure 3 below). Another 22% said they were using

the matching service because their organisation was struggling to fill Governor vacancies. Those that selected 'other' said that they used the service because it was free or because they wanted to advertise the Governor roles in multiple places to fill their vacancies.

Figure 3. Main reason FE provider signed up to the Inspiring FE Governance matching service
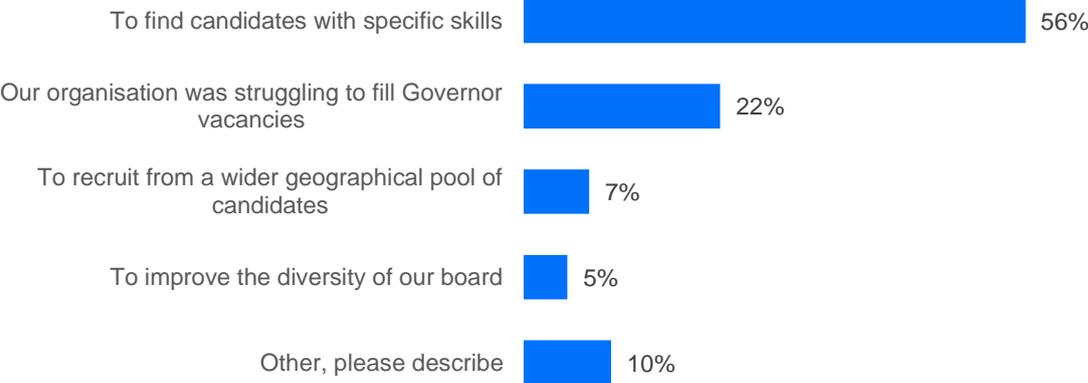
Source: ICF survey of FE providers, n=41

2.4.2 Volunteers

Most of the volunteers we interviewed reported that they wanted to become Governors in order to *'give something back'* to their local community and utilise their skills and experiences. However, it was notable that many did not originally intend to become Governors in FE. Some volunteers we interviewed stated they had originally planned to become a Governor in a school, but once they found out more about FE through the programme they felt or were advised that it would be a better match for their skills.

Some volunteers also reported that they had limited understanding of the FE sector, and therefore did not have a strong interest in becoming a Governor in FE. However, some gained a better understanding of the sector through the presentations of the delivery partner events or through the programme website, and therefore volunteered for FE governance roles.

Most of the volunteers we interviewed also reported that they were unaware of other sources of information for becoming a Governor in FE. These individuals stated that they accessed the programme because it was near the top of their search on FE governance. Most of these volunteers stated that they would not have considered searching for Governor vacancies in their local college.

2.5 Quality of programme delivery

2.5.1 Accessibility of the online matching system

The online matching system received reasonably positive feedback. In the survey, around two-thirds (61%) of respondents found the online matching system easy or very easy to use (see Figure 4). However, a relatively high proportion (20%) found it difficult or very difficult to use.

Figure 4. How easy or difficult FE providers found using the online matching system

| 5% | 56% | 15% | 15% | 5% | 5% |

■ Very easy   ■ Easy   ■ Neither easy nor difficult   ■ Difficult   ■ Very difficult   ■ Don't know

Source: ICF survey of FE providers, n=41

In the qualitative interviews, most Governance Professionals reported the system was relatively easy to use. However, most also reported some areas of improvement. This included:

− The provider specifying a radius from which they would like to recruit volunteers from. This does not indicate volunteers' willingness to travel, which resulted in one interviewee stating they missed out on an appropriate candidate for the role. It was suggested that the radius tool should allow for volunteers to specify their willingness to travel. At present only provider recruiters have the existing option to widen their search radius to widen volunteer choice, although volunteers can set a home and work postcode to widen the area where they are willing to work.
− The lack of alerts for new volunteers being added to the system. A few Governance Professionals reported that the lack of alerts meant that they had to constantly enter the system to see if any new volunteers are on the system, which is time consuming.
− No automatic system for removing volunteers from the system that have already found a governance post or are no longer looking. Some Governance Professionals reported that they found this frustrating, as they made contact with volunteers that were not interested in a governance vacancy which therefore resulted in a low response rate. At present the onus is on the volunteer to remove their profile.

Most of the volunteers thought the online portal was straightforward to navigate and simple for them to log in their details to sign up to the system. Some of the volunteers stated they would not change anything about the process.

2.5.2   Initial information, advice and guidance provided to participants

Most of the volunteers were happy with the information and guidance they have received from the programme about the FE sector and the role of Governors. As a consequence, they felt they had a good idea about what was expected of them when they joined their institution.

Many acknowledged however that developing a good understanding of FE was an on-going process. As one stated *"It was a steep learning curve"*. Some volunteers reported that they also received a detailed induction from their FE provider which they found extremely helpful, but many expected that it would take them at least a year or so to fully understand their role. Some felt that further training on this would be helpful, which would be additional to the services that the delivery partner was contracted to deliver.

2.5.3   Usability of the system to match Governors to providers

In the qualitative interviews, most Governance Professionals were broadly satisfied with the way they were able to use the tool to recruit Governors. However, some also

identified areas of improvement. These included:

- Challenges in communicating directly with volunteers. Some interviewees stated they were not given an alert to inform them that they had received an expression of interest from a volunteer or received their contact details. The delivery partner stated that this is however provided automatically by the service, and therefore the reason they did not receive the alert was because the email was directed to their spam folder.
- Differing levels of detail available on volunteers. A few Governance Professionals also stated that some volunteers had not fully provided information on all their background, experience and skillset. This was despite the delivery partner reporting that volunteers were sent email alerts if their profile was incomplete. As a result, Governance Professionals were frequently required to contact the volunteers to find out more about their skills and experiences, which was time consuming.
- Difficulties in accessing participant profiles, even when the participant has expressed an interest in a provider governance vacancy. As one stated: *"I couldn't draw down the [volunteer profile] in a form that I could circulate to the search committee. This was difficult because we need the information and we don't want to ask them to complete another application process".*

Several of the volunteers also reported that they would benefit from a more streamlined way of being contacted by colleges and found it inconvenient to communicate through the portal. However, some also acknowledged a need for filtering some contacts with providers. As one stated: *"The management of the way people contact you is difficult. I know people are trying to recruit Governors and it's difficult to find the right person. However, I got a lot of people contacting me and it was a bit overwhelming to begin with."* (Volunteer). Additionally, the delivery partner also felt that keeping communication on the platform allows them to intervene if there are issues and also ensures data protection compliance.

2.5.4 Extent to which the service met expectations

Governance Professionals had mixed views on whether the programme met their expectations. As Figure 5 shows, around half of survey respondents (44%) slightly or strongly agreed that the matching service had met their expectations. Over a third (37%) slightly or strongly disagreed.

Perceptions of the effectiveness of the service largely related to whether providers had been able to fill Governor vacancies through the service. Nearly all of those that did fill the Governor roles felt the programme had met their expectations. Those that did not fill vacancies were largely dissatisfied with the programme.

Figure 5. Number of FE providers who agreed matching service met their expectations
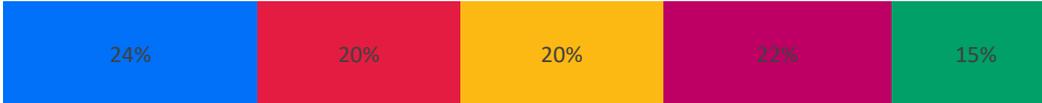
| 24% | 20% | 20% | 22% | 15% |

■ Strongly agree ■ Slightly agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Slightly disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Source: ICF FE provider survey, n=41

The qualitative interviews provided a similar picture. Some Governance Professionals

reported a good range of volunteers in their local area and therefore were satisfied the programme achieved its objective of allowing them to identify potential Governors that they would not have otherwise identified. However, other Governance professionals reported that they did not identify a wide range of volunteers through the programme. This may be because they had not been logging in to the tool regularly to identify new volunteers or because there was a lack of suitable volunteers in their local area.

2.6   Management of the programme

The programme was generally considered to be well managed by the delivery partner. Volunteers and Governance Professionals reported no issues in getting answers to any queries they had on the system and most problems were resolved quickly.

The delivery partner also reported that they received helpful support from ETF to deliver the programme. They reported the information guidance they received from the ETF was clear and sent in a timely manner. The delivery partner found ETF particularly helpful in promoting the matching service to the wider audience.

Where issues were identified, the delivery partner reported that the ETF were helpful in resolving them quickly. However, they stated there were few issues as the system was generally quite stable as it had been running for several years.

The delivery partner did report that the funding for the 2021/22 financial year was confirmed relatively late (by early March). As a consequence, they felt this inhibited their ability to plan for the next year as they were planning for a winding down of the service on March 31st. However, the delivery partner reported that this was as a consequence of the way the ETF is funded by the DfE, where budgets are agreed late in the financial year.

2.7   Key findings

− Governance Professionals generally believed there was a strong need for the programme. Most reported that they had experienced difficulties in recruiting new Governors with particular skillsets. Some also reported that they felt the programme was an effective tool in helping them improve the diversity of their Governance boards.
− There was also evidence that the service provides volunteers interested in becoming Governors in FE with a focal point for accessing information and governance opportunities. Most of the volunteers stated they would not have looked for governance vacancy in local providers and the programme website appears to come near the top of engine searches on governance in FE.
− The programme has been largely successful in getting volunteers and providers to sign up for the programme. Nearly all FE colleges have signed up for the programme and there is a regular flow of volunteers registering on the system as well. The characteristics of volunteers are also diverse, incorporating a high proportion of ethnic minorities and younger individuals (those under 35).
− For some providers, the programme was seen as effective in helping them recruit Governors that they would not have otherwise been able to identify through their existing channels. Not all providers were able to fill vacancies however, but this is likely to be due to more volunteers being identified in some areas than others, with fewer volunteers recruited in coastal and rural areas.

– The matching system has largely been effective but could be improved by automatic alerts when volunteers have received a message or when a new volunteer has been registered on the system. It was also suggested that volunteers could specify a radius where they were willing to become Governors, and are automatically removed from the system once they are no longer looking for governance vacancies.

3.   OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

This chapter explores the outcomes and early impacts of the Inspiring FE Governance matching service. It examines the extent to which the matching tool has increased Governor recruitment in the FE sector, addressed provider governance skills gaps and influenced the effectiveness of FE governance boards.

3.1   Increasing Governor recruitment in FE

The programme has largely been effective in recruiting new Governors to FE. Many of the volunteers that were interviewed reported that they did not initially consider working in FE governance when they signed up for the service as they were initially interested in being a Governor at a school. Some also stated they were not aware of FE until they attended events run by the delivery partner. Without the matching service, it is likely that most participants would not have chosen to work as Governors in FE and would instead be working as a Governor in a school or not working as a Governor at all.

Governance Professionals similarly reported that the programme enabled them to identify new volunteers that would not have applied for Governor adverts that the provider runs. This includes enabling them to recruit those that have little knowledge of the FE sector and therefore would not have applied for a role directly, and also to recruit volunteers that live further afield. As one stated: "*For us, it was another method to publicise the vacancies and help us get more people.*"

> *"I don't understand why FE providers wouldn't use the matching service. It enables you to get a much broader pool of candidates and you are able to ensure they have a wide range of skills on the board and independent of the college." (Volunteer)*

There was also a sense that the programme website quickly enabled volunteers to identify a route to becoming an FE Governor as it appeared prominently on search engines. Without this, there was a risk that even individuals that had an interest in becoming an FE Governor may not have been able to find information on how to do so.

There is evidence of provider demand for more than the 49 volunteers that were placed in governance roles in FE in 2020-21. In the survey around half of respondents stated that they had not filled governance roles through the programme. This was corroborated in the qualitative interviews. However, in the interviews we found most users that had not filled vacancies had not created a vacancy through the service but were rather reviewing volunteers to identify those that would add to the skillset of their board. These individuals were aiming to add to their board rather than fill a specific position.

Around half (44%) of survey respondents felt the matching service was an effective or very effective tool for recruiting Governors. These were mostly providers that had recruited participants through the programme. Around a fifth (19%) did not feel it was effective. A relatively large proportion (34%) offered no opinion, which were most likely to be Governance Professionals that had not yet used the system to recruit Governors (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Views of FE providers on matching service as an effective way to fill vacancies in FE governing boards

Very effective	Effective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Ineffective	Very ineffective
7%	39%	34%	12%	7%

Source: ICF survey of FE providers, n=41

3.2   Supporting providers fill governance vacancies

In the qualitative interviews some Governance Professionals that recruited volunteers stated that the programme helped them fill vacancies that would otherwise have been difficult to fill. Most of these Governance Professionals stated they were impressed with the calibre of people who they had recruited through the service. As shown in Chapter 2, it was most commonly used to enable providers to recruit Governors with a financial background, which were required to support the financial management in the organisation.

> *"Often when recruiting locally, you get lots of people and it can be difficult to say no to them. Now with the Inspiring FE system, you can put on the website that you want someone with say an IT or a finance background, then people with an interest self-select." (FE provider)*

Even when the programme was not used specifically for addressing hard-to-fill vacancies, Governance Professionals felt it provided them with a broader range of volunteers to recruit from. This enabled them to recruit a more diverse range of Governors that they would not have otherwise.

> *"We wanted to find a way of recruiting Governors, particularly to be able to see gender, age, ethnicity to help us get a balance on the governing body, and this service helped us do that. It also helped us find people that we wouldn't have found otherwise." (FE provider)*

There was also evidence of the programme allowing some providers to recruit at scale. This was particularly necessary in some providers that had recently introduced fixed terms for their Governors. One Governance Professional doing this reported that the programme was a valuable tool in speeding up this recruitment process. They stated that they had filled four of their seven Governor vacancies through volunteers from the Inspiring FE Governance programme.

3.3   Improving the skills of governance boards

Most of the FE providers who had placed Governors, thought the matching service enabled them to find Governors with the right skills and expertise. Figure 7 below shows that of the survey respondents that had recruited Governors through the programme, 80% slightly or strongly agreed that the matching service had enabled them to find Governors with the right skills and expertise for their organisation. Only 15% were dissatisfied with the Governors they recruited through the programme.

Figure 7. The extent FE providers agree or disagree the matching service has enabled them to find Governors with the right skills and expertise

| 30% | 50% | 5% | 10% | 5% |

■ Strongly agree ■ Slightly agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Slightly disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Source: ICF survey of FE providers, n=20

In the qualitative interviews, most Governance Professionals stated they were impressed with the calibre of people who had been recruited through the service. They felt this had enabled them to recruit a *"broad range of skills to the board"*.

The programme has also largely been used to recruit Governors with skills that are traditionally in demand in the sector. As shown in Chapter 2, volunteers that were recruited to Governor posts most commonly had experience or background in law, finance, auditing and STEM. which Governance Professions reported were typically areas which FE providers had faced difficulties recruiting for.

> *"We recruited people from certain backgrounds deliberately so we could use their expertise. For example, one Governor had a background which included being responsible for safeguarding in their work so they became the link Governor on safeguarding – it helped to interest them in the college and the college got a helpful different perspective. Equally, one of the Governors was a local solicitor and we asked his advice on some legal work, and we had someone worked in planning to engage in planning work the college was doing".* (FE provider)

In the interviews many Governance Professionals also reported that the programme had helped them create a more diverse Governor board. This in part was because it gave providers more choice so they could select volunteers that best reflected the characteristics of their local area. However, it likely also reflects that the programme has recruited volunteers that may not typically have considered working in FE governance.

> *"When I put a position up on the Inspiring FE service, I would typically get 8-10 expressions of interest. That gives you the opportunity to look at gender, ethnicity, age profile – the ability to mix up the board a bit more. Sometimes if you go to a specific organisation, then you're tying your hands to have someone nominated from that organisation e.g. for women or BAME candidates who they'll expect you to appoint. But the ETF service is more open without creating expectations."* (FE provider)
>
> *"We successfully recruited 5 or 6 Governors over 3 years and got people we wouldn't have gotten without the recruitment programme...over the 3 years the college turned over 50% of the board and moved it on significantly, changing the gender balance and age profile too."* (FE provider)

3.4   Volunteer retention and contribution to the sector

The interviews and survey suggest that most volunteers recruited through the programme are likely to stay for the near future. All the Governors we interviewed reported that they were satisfied with the role and wanted to continue in their role. The only exception was one Governor who was a Governor in a school as well as an FE provider who stated that they may have to drop one of their governance roles as

meetings moved back to being face-to-face, due to the travel commitments.

Similarly, most of the Governance Professionals that were interviewed reported that the volunteers had settled well into their role and seemed content in their role. However, a few reported that it was too early to judge how effectively they would be able to engage with colleagues during face-to-face meetings, as most had only ever attended virtual meetings. A few also had concerns some may not visit the provider regularly once they could, which would affect their effectiveness as a Governor.

All the volunteers we interviewed also stated that they felt they had the opportunity to communicate their thoughts in governance meetings and use their skills and experiences. This was corroborated in the Governance Professionals survey, where 85% of respondents that had recruited a Governor through the programme (17 of 20) agreed that the Governors were confident in communicating and collaborating with other governing professionals. All also stated they were motivated to make a change in their organisation, as this is why they had applied to become a Governor.

3.5   Impact of the programme on governance boards

Most of the FE providers thought that the Governors they recruited from the matching service had made an impact to their Governing Board. Of the 20 Governance Professionals who had recruited a Governor, most reported that they made positive contributions to the Governing Board, as outlined in Figure 8 below. In total:

− 90% reported that the volunteers had brought new skills to their governance board, of which 20% strongly agreed
− 85% agreed that the Governors were able to challenge and scrutinise college plans, of which 10% strongly agreed
− 70% agreeing that the volunteer had influenced decisions in their organisation, of which 15% strongly agreed

Figure 8. FE providers view on Governor's contribution to the Governing Board
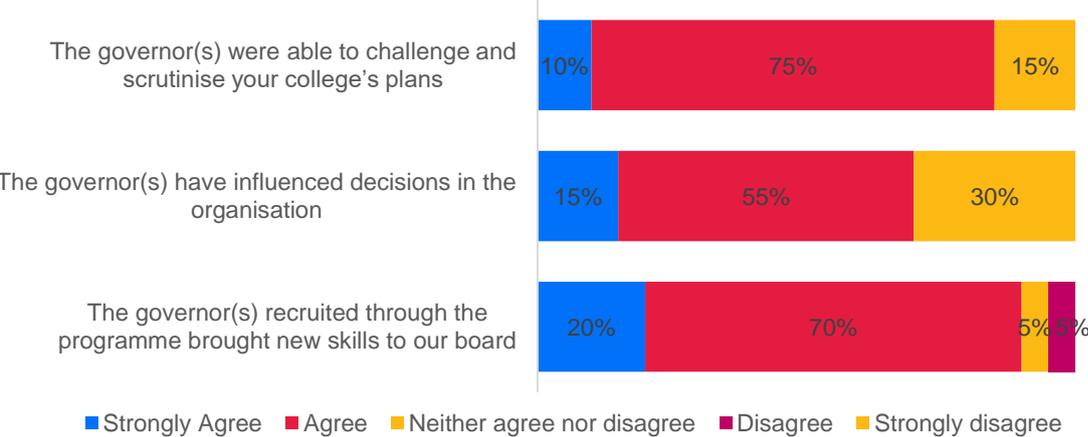
Source: ICF survey of FE providers, n=20

This was also reflected in the interviews with FE providers. Most Governance Professionals stated that the new Governors recruited through the programme had made positive contributions to their organisation. Some specific examples reported by the Governance Professionals included:

20/37

- A Governor using their knowledge and expertise of apprenticeships and funding helped to support the FE provider in this area.
- A Governor reviewing and asking 'pertinent questions' regarding the audit report to ensure the auditing was completed effectively.
- Another Governor with a financial background asked 'astute questions' when reviewing FE provider financial proposals for the upcoming year.
- A Governor making a substantial contribution to the organisation's cybersecurity internal audit.
- During the pandemic, a Governor suggested measures to mitigate the risks of high dropout rates and low attendance due to students working remotely and the effects this would have on their mental health.

Governance Professionals did however report that for some volunteers it was too early to provide tangible examples of the impact they have had on their governance boards. This was in part because many reported that the recent Governor(s) they recruited were still trying to understand their role and the FE sector. Additionally, some also needed to develop relationships with other members of the board, which was taking place more slowly at present because meetings are largely held remotely.

3.6 Impact of the programme on the sector

Governance Professionals reported that it was too early to identify any tangible impact of the programme on learning in their organisation and, ultimately, on learners. This is unsurprising given most Governors recruited in 2020-21 were in post for only a few months and have attended a handful of Governance board meetings.

However, based on the programme theory of change it would be reasonable to expect that these impacts would be forthcoming in the medium and long-term. This is because:

- The programme has had a tangible change in the skills and experiences of Governors, including bringing in individuals with specialist skills. This will improve the robustness of audits and financial planning as well as providing sector or educational insights which can inform the provision offer
- The programme has also led to more diversity in Governors in terms of age and ethnicity. This helps ensure that a more diverse range of perspectives are used to inform the future direction of the organisation
- Governors recruited through the programme appear well-placed to apply their skills in practice, with the evidence from the Governance Professionals and volunteer interviews suggesting that they are able to communicate their thoughts during meetings and are motivated to make a positive change to their organisation's curriculum offer and improve its financial management.

The scale of impact will be small however, as there were only 49 volunteers placed in Governor roles in 2021-22. This means the programme was less likely to create a *'sea change'* in the operation of governance boards.

3.7 Estimated cost per placement

The programme appears to provide Governance placements at a relatively low cost. There is relatively little deadweight in the 49 volunteers that entered governance roles, with very few of the volunteers we interviewed reporting that they would have entered FE Governance roles without the programme. This would indicate the cost per placement

would therefore be around £1,200-£1,500 per new Governor. The programme is also able to leverage substantial added value from the delivery partner as they are able to deliver joint promotional activities with the school governor recruitment programme which they also deliver.

Given almost every (86%) college in the sector has signed up to IFEG, this indicates there is a high demand for services to find suitable governors to meet each college's required appointment criteria'. There is evidence of the programme having an impact in addressing this, with nearly half stating the programme was an effective way for recruiting Governors and less than a fifth not agreeing it was effective. However, there remains a substantial volume of colleges that have not been able to fill vacancies through the programme, reflecting that the 49 volunteers placed on the programme comprise only a small proportion of the estimated 2500-3000 governors in FE[3]

3.8   Key findings

− Although relatively small, the programme has largely been successful in recruiting new FE Governors, as most of the volunteers engaged by the programme would not have considered working in FE governance without the programme. It also provides a focal point which also makes it easier for volunteers to apply for FE governance roles.
− The programme has enabled providers to bring in new skills and experience into their organisation. In some cases, this helped providers address skills shortages in areas such as financial management and audit, STEM and specialist topics such as safeguarding. In other cases, it helped improve the diversity of skills and experiences on governance boards, particularly as the programme engaged a high proportion of younger adults and ethnic minorities. One provider also reported that it enabled them to recruit Governors to scale, which meant they were able to make substantial changes to the composition of their board.
− Volunteers are largely satisfied in their role, and have the opportunity, motivation and capability to make changes. Most were also felt to be able to communicate effectively with their fellow Governors, although this has been slightly limited at present due to most board meetings taking place remotely.
− Some providers were already able to describe tangible changes the organisation (see Section 3.5) made as a result of the Governors they recruited from the programme. However, for others it was too early to identify change, as the new Governors were still developing their understanding of their organisation and the FE sector.
− It is too early to identify tangible organisational impacts from the programme. However, many of the conditions appear to be in place for impact as the programme has improved the skills mix of governance boards and the new Governors feel they are able to apply their skills and experience.
− The programme appears to provide Governance placements at a relatively low cost, with the cost per new Governor (excluding deadweight) estimated to be between £1,200 - £1,500.

4.   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

---

[3] ETF in house research

4.1 Conclusions

4.1.1 Has the programme achieved its objectives?

The programme has largely been successful in achieving its objectives. The number of new Governors recruited to the programme is only slightly below target (49 out of 50), and the fieldwork suggests that most of the volunteers engaged in the programme would not have considered working in FE Governance had it not been for the programme. Additionally, the volunteers on the programme that have entered Governor roles have largely had skills that are in demand in the sector and includes many younger adults and ethnic minorities.

There is also generally high awareness of the programme among providers, with most FE colleges signing up to the programme. For providers, it is at a minimum another 'string in their bow' for filling Governor vacancies. At best, it has been shown to be an effective tool for providers to make transformational wholesale changes to the composition of their governance boards.

Indeed, the programme plays an important role in the FE landscape. For volunteers, it provides a focal point for individuals to learn more about becoming a Governor in FE and then to apply for roles across a range of providers. There is a risk that without the programme, volunteers may not be able to easily identify information on how to become a Governor in FE, which could deter some from entering the sector.

A key strength of the programme is that it is scalable. With the current funding allocation, it is possible to maintain the website and provide technical support, while also undertaking joint recruitment activities with the school governor recruitment programme. However, with additional funding it is also able to expand the promotional activities to recruit new volunteers in areas where there might be existing or emerging demand.

At its current scale, the programme has had a positive impact on FE provider governance but not yet a sector level impact as the number of new Governors entering the sector is relatively small. There also remains potential gaps in recruiting volunteers in more rural or coastal areas, where there is a smaller pool of individuals to draw from.

4.1.2 What has worked well and less well?

The strengths of the programme have been its reach both among providers and volunteers. There is generally a steady flow of individuals signing up to the programme and in providers using the tool to help them fill vacancies. The online presence of the programme is a key strength too as it appears relatively high in search engine searches.

The online system was also seen as functional, but most Governance Professionals and volunteers were able to identify practical changes to improve its operation. This included the use of alerts that would then signpost volunteers and providers to use the system, as there is a risk that some sign up but then do not regularly check for messages. Some also wanted more consistency in the information contained on volunteers, including more consistent access to CVs.

There also appears to be a substantial number of providers that would be willing to recruit additional Governors if they were to find suitable volunteers that add to the skills of their board. This suggests that there is some untapped potential to grow the service.

4.2 Recommendations

The evaluation identified the following recommendations for consideration:

6. **The DfE and ETF should continue to invest in the online tool for directing volunteers to Governance roles in FE**. There is clear evidence from the research that the programme is meeting a substantial need among providers and volunteers, and is attracting new Governors that would not have entered the FE sector through other channels

7. **The delivery partner should be supported to make improvements to the online system,** most notably by creating an alerts system that would mean users could receive updates and be informed when they received messages. This would increase the number of providers that actively use the system and also speed up the recruitment process as volunteers would be able to respond quicker to messages. There could also be changes to the way the distance that volunteers are willing to work is specified, more clarity in the system on whether volunteers are signing up to volunteer for school or FE Governor vacancies or both, and a way for automatically taking individuals off the system

8. **The delivery partner should be supported to undertake targeted recruitment in areas where volunteers are under-represented**. This could include particular areas or regions or for particular roles and experience. This flexibility would allow the programme to respond better to meet provider demand and ensure more are able to fill Governance vacancies

9. **The ETF and its partners should undertake more systematic promotion of the service through their existing networks**. This includes more systematic encouragement of providers to actively use the service, including promotion at governance groups and through training programmes (such as the Governance Professionals Development Programme). Additionally, there is also scope for producing promotional materials that could be distributed at organisations that work with professional or employer bodies, such as the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, Sector Skills Councils and Apprenticeship Trailblazer groups. This should include strengthening marketing to potential governors with high demand skills or geographical locations

10. **The ETF to collect regular (e.g. quarterly) from the delivery partner more systematic information on the characteristics of volunteers, aligned to the data characteristics the DfE will use for benchmarking Governor diversity**. This would help the ETF examine the reach and coverage of the programme. It includes data on geographical data and wider information on the volunteers that have signed up from the programme, including any reasons why volunteers may have turned down Governor roles..

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Area	Inspiring FE Governance Programme
Process	
Awareness, expectations and motivations	• Marketing and promotion effectively raised awareness of the programme among the target audience (delivery partner, provider and participant interviews)
Achievements against targets	• Number of volunteers and FE providers(programme MI) • Demographics against targets and needs (programme MI and participant survey)
Delivery	
Effectiveness of the programme structure and content	• Matching service is easy to access and navigate (participant interviews, provider interviews and survey) • Challenges/barriers to delivery, and how they were/could be resolved (delivery partner interviews, participant interviews)
Delivery	• Quality of matching service with supplier matching volunteers with requisite skills and expertise to FE governor vacancies on college boards (participant/provider interviews and survey, delivery partner interviews) • Effectiveness of provider and volunteer engagement (programme MI, participant/provider interviews, delivery partner interviews) • Usability of the online system (participant/provider interviews and survey)
Outcomes/impact	
Impact of programme on professional practice and organisational performance	• Integration of skills, knowledge and confidence in role and practice (participant and provider interviews, participant surveys) • Main benefits/ value of the programme (effectiveness in role) (participant and provider interviews, participant surveys)
Outcomes/impacts (programme-specific)	• Increasing the diversity of of governors (provider interviews, programme MI) • Increased skills and experience of governor boards (provider and participant interviews, programme MI) • Providers able to reduce governor vacancies and skills gaps (provider and participant interviews)
Key success factors, best practice and areas for improvement	• Key success factors and areas which provide best practice examples (engagement, delivery and implementation) (all primary research) • Key areas for programme improvement (engagement, delivery and implementation) (all primary research)
Longer-term impact	• Expected impact of learning on future work (participant interviews and survey) • Changes in career aspirations for the role (intention to stay in role) (participant interviews and survey) • Sustainability of short term to long term impacts on the participant, the governing body and the provider (participant interviews and survey, provider interviews) • Challenges/barriers for future programmes and governance roles and ways to reduce them

Source Key: Participants includes individuals that have attended GDP and GPDP training or taken up a governor post due to Inspiring FE. Providers interviews comprise interviews with FE staff that work alongside the participants. For GDP and Inspiring FE this includes

ANNEX 2 RESEARCH TOOLS

Participant interview topic guide

Introduction and aims

ICF have been commissioned by the Education and Training Foundation to conduct an evaluation of three of its governance programmes. These are the Governance Development Programme, the Governance Professionals Programme and Inspiring FE.

As part of the research, we are interviewing a selection of programme participants and their colleagues. The purpose of this interview is to understand your experience, including any benefits and impacts of the training. We would specifically like to explore

1. Your reasons/motivations for undertaking the programme, and how you first became aware of the ETF governance programmes.
2. Your experience of the support received and how this met your needs and expectations.
3. [for GDP and GPDP] What you learnt from the programme
4. What benefits the programme has brought your work and the skills and experiences you bring to governance in your organisation
5. [for GDP and GPDP] What changes you have made to your work practice, and what other changes you may have planned

Participation in the interview is voluntary but we are grateful that you have taken the time to help with this important research, If there are any questions during the interview that you do not want to answer, you do not have to answer them. You can also ask to stop this interview at any time.

Information collected during this interview will be kept confidential and anonymised – your name will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study, and any other personal data collected will not be shared outside of the research team.

Ask participants if they have any questions.

Participant background

1. Can you tell me more about your current role and professional background?

    - *Prompt: what are your main responsibilities? How long have you been in your current role?*

Awareness, expectations of the programme and motivations for applying

2. How did you first heard about the programme?

3. What made you choose this programme?

    - *Prompt: what motivated/interested you about it? Who/what influenced your choice? (e.g. employers, peers)*

    - *Prompt: had you thought at all about undertaking similar professional development before hearing about this opportunity?*

4. How easy was it to apply? Were there any barriers to applying?

5. Before you started the programme, what were your expectations?

    - *Prompt: in what ways did you think the programme might help/benefit you? How would it benefit your organisation?*

6. Before signing up to the programme, did you have any initial doubts/concerns?

Programme delivery

7. What motivated you to become an FE Governor?

8. In your view, to what extent do you believe the matching service was straightforward to use?

9. How have you settled into your new role?

   - *Prompts: Has it met expectations?*

   - *Do you feel you are able to participate in the discussions?*

   - *What skills and experiences do you feel you bring to the role?*

   - *Have you experienced any challenges/barriers to getting involved in provider Governance?*

10. Is there anything you would change about delivery of the matching service?

Outcomes and impacts of the programme

11. To what extent do you feel the organisation you are a governor in is a good fit for your skills and experience?

    - *Prompts: what has worked well? Have you faced any challenges in your new role?*

12. Can you please describe any examples of when you have been able to utilise your skills in your new role?

13. In your view, do you think there have been any benefits to your organisation since you started your role?

Final reflections

14. Thinking about the outcomes of the programme, do you think these will be sustainable in the longer term? Why/why not?

15. Do you feel you need further support or training in your role? Why/why not?

    - *Prompt: IF YES: what kind of support or training?*

16. Do you intend to stay in your role? Why/why not?

    - *Prompt: has the learning contributed to any changes in your career plans as a governor/governance professional?*

FE provider interview topic guide

Introduction and aims

ICF have been commissioned by the Education and Training Foundation to conduct an evaluation of three of its governance programmes. These are the Governance Development Programme, the Governance Professionals Programme and Inspiring FE.

As part of the research, we are interviewing a selection of programme participants and their colleagues. The purpose of this interview is to understand your experience, including any benefits and impacts of the training. We would specifically like to explore

1. Your reasons/motivations for participating in the programme
2. Your views on how well the programme has been delivered
3. How the programme affected participants' knowledge and skills
4. How participants have applied what they learnt and the impact this has had on your organisation

Participation in the interview is voluntary but we are grateful that you have taken the time to help with this important research, If there are any questions during the interview that you do not want to answer, you do not have to answer them. You can also ask to stop this interview at any time.

Information collected during this interview will be kept confidential and anonymised – your name will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study, and any other personal data collected will not be shared outside of the research team.

Ask participants if they have any questions.

Interviewee background

1. What is your job title, role and responsibilities?

2. Confirm their involvement in the programme

   Inspiring FE: How long have they been trying to fill Governor vacancies through the programme? How many roles have they filled?

3. Why did your organisation decide to participate and what were your expectations?

Programme delivery/implementation

4. What difficulties have you experienced in the last few years trying to develop the expertise and diversity of your Governor board?

5. What are the challenges in engaging Governors?

6. To what extent did the matching service help you fill Governor vacancies?

7. What are your views on how the process worked? What has worked well? What has not worked so well?

8. Is there anything you would change to improve the matching service?

Outcomes and impact of the programme

9. In your view, what do you feel are the key benefits for participants?

10. What do you think the key benefits are for FE organisations?

11. Have participants been able to utilise their skills and knowledge in the FE organisation? Why/why not?

    -Prompt: how have they been able to utilise their skills and knowledge?

12. Do you think the matching service is an effective way to fill vacancies in FE governing boards?

29/37

13. What have been the main benefits for your organisation from being involved in Inspiring FE?

   - *Prompts: what skills, experience and knowledge has the new recruit brought to your organisation?*

14. Do you intend to continue using the matching service in the future?

Delivery partner interview topic guide

Interviewee background

1. What is your job title, role and responsibilities?

2. Confirm their involvement in the programme

3. Why did your organisation decide to delivery the programme?

Programme delivery/implementation

4. What activities did you undertake to recruit participants to the programme? What approaches worked well/less well?

5. How was the delivery of the programme activities organised in your organisation? Who did what?

6. To what extent has the programme delivered against its original target and expectations? What were the reasons for any under/over performance?

7. What worked well in delivering the programme, and what worked less well?

8. Were there any changes that were made to how programme compared to what was originally planned? What was the reasons for this? *Prompt for ay changes made as a result of the recent lockdown.*

9. Have you faced any challenges in delivering the programme/matching service?

   - *Prompt: are there any areas you believe need to be improved?*

10. What would you describe as the key success factors of the programme?

Outcomes and impact of the programme

11. In your opinion, what are the key challenges that providers experience in recruiting Governors? How does this compare with recruitment challenges in school governance?

12. How does the programme helped overcome these issues? How do you feel it has performed against initial expectations?

13. What do you feel are the key benefits the programme brought participants? How have they applied what they learnt in practice?

14. What do you feel are the key benefits the programme has brought providers? What providers do you feel benefit most from the programme?

15. How could the programme be improved in future?

Survey questionnaire

INTRO

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this short survey to tell us about your experiences of the Inspiring FE matching service. The aim of the survey is to gather your views on the effectiveness of the Inspiring FE matching service and any benefits. This will help inform the future direction and improvement of the programme.

We would be grateful for your help with this survey by providing your views on the Inspiring FE Governance. The survey will take around 5 – 10 minutes to complete.

We are ICF, an independent research organisation who have been commissioned by the Education and Training Foundation to evaluate the three governance programmes.

If you have any questions about the research or completing the survey, please contact Catherine Fenton, Research Manager, at ICF: Catherine.Fenton@icf.com

At ICF we care about your personal and sensitive data. This survey is designed to be compliant with Regulation 2018/1725 and the General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679). All the data gathered in this survey will be stored by ICF in compliance with the Data Controller's Privacy Statement and the ICF Privacy Statement.

1. Respondent background

LENGTH IN ROLE

How many years have you been working at this FE provider?

1. Less than a year
2. One year but less than two years
3. Two years but less than three years
4. Three to five years
5. Six to ten years
6. Eleven or more years

LENGTH USING SERVICE

How long have you been using the Inspiring FE matching service?

1. Less than 6 months
2. More than 6 months but less than a year
3. More than a year but less than two
4. More than two years

NUMBER

How many volunteers have you recruited through the Inspiring FE matching service?

1. None
2. One

3. Two

4. Three

5. Four

6. Five or more

IF ANSWERED 1 (NONE) AT NUMBER:

Why have you not recruited any volunteers through the Inspiring FE matching service?

1. I was unable to find someone with the right skills and expertise

2. I have only recently signed up to the matching service

3. I had issues managing the system

4. The volunteer/s dropped out at the last minute

5. Other, please describe

REASONS

What was the main reason why your organisation signed up to the Inspiring FE Governance matching service? Please select one option.

1. Our organisation was struggling to fill Governor vacancies

2. To find candidates with specific skills

3. To recruit from a wider geographical pool of candidates

4. To improve the diversity of our board

5. Other, please describe

VACANICES

To what extent has the matching service helped you to fill Governor vacancies?

1. It has helped us to fill **all** of our Governor vacancies

2. It has helped us to fill **some** of our Governor vacancies

3. It has **not** helped us to fill any of our vacancies

SKILLS

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the matching service has enabled you to find Governors with the right skills and expertise?

1. Strongly agree

2. Slightly agree

3. Neither agree nor disagree

4. Slightly disagree

5. Strongly disagree

EXPECTATIONS

34/37

How much do you agree or disagree that the Inspiring FE matching service has met your expectations?

1. Strongly agree
2. Slightly agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Slightly disagree
5. Strongly disagree

IF ANSWERED 4 (DISAGREE) OR 5 (STRONGLY DISAGREE) AT EXPECTATIONS:

Can you please briefly describe why the programme has not met your expectations?

-OPEN TEXT-

SYSTEM

In your view, how easy or difficult was it to use the online matching system?

1. Very easy
2. Easy
3. Neither easy nor difficult
4. Difficult
5. Very difficult
6. Don't know

IF ANSWERED 4 (DIFFICULT) OR 5 (VERY DIFFICULT) AT SYSTEM:

Can you please briefly describe how you would improve the system so it is easier to use?

-OPEN TEXT-

2. Outcomes and benefits

Please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about the governors you have taken on through the programme?

COLUMNS:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree or disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

ROWS:

The governor(s) recruited through the programme brought new skills to our board

The governor(s) were confident to communicate and collaborate with other governing professionals

The governor(s) were able to challenge and scrutinise your college's plans

The governor(s) have influenced decisions in the organisation

To what extent do you think the Inspiring FE matching service is an effective way to fill vacancies in FE governing boards?

1. Very effective
2. Effective
3. Neither effective nor ineffective
4. Ineffective
5. Very ineffective

Demographics

GENDER

Please describe your gender identity. ('X' and 'other' are intentional internationally recognised options to enable anyone who wishes to do so to choose a gender identity that is different to the traditional gender binary of male and female.)

1. Female (including male to female trans women)
2. Male (including female to male trans men)
3. X (see note above)
4. Other, please describe
5. Prefer not to say

AGE

What is your age?

1. 20-24
2. 25-29
3. 30-34
4. 35-39
5. 40-44
6. 45-49
7. 50-54
8. 55-59
9. 60-64
10. 65+

AREA

In what area in England do you work?

1. North East
2. North West
3. Yorkshire and the Humber
4. East Midlands

5. West Midlands

6. East of England

7. South East

8. South West

9. Greater London

10. Prefer not to say