

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 A key recommendation is that developing a self-diagnostic tool targeted at Welsh SMEs **is** justified by the findings from this project. Whilst low levels of short-term demand are probably inevitable, there is strong underlying need, and opportunities for releasing potential and latent demand through effective promotion and support.
- 9.2 Any decision to commission the development of a leadership/ management diagnostic tool for managers in Wales would clearly be a matter for ELWa and its partners. In making any decision, careful thought ought to be given not only to the design parameters and cost of developing a tool, but how it might best be promoted and supported, and aligned with existing advisory and support services. An effective range of high-quality follow-on activities ought to be guaranteed for managers who did seek to identify their development needs by using a self-diagnostic tool.
- 9.3 Looking to a specification, if one were to be commissioned, we believe the parameters summarised in Figure 5 would be appropriate – at least as an outline. Further work would be needed to decide on branding, precise design parameters, presentation, design of electronic versions and other requirements.
- 9.4 We recommend further research is done to understand more about the size of potential markets for a tool – in essence, establishing clearer dimensions for the potential and latent demand elements identified in Figure 2 earlier in the report. In-company work (e.g. management/leadership skills audits) is probably the best way to do this – maybe at the stage of piloting a draft tool, part of the suggested work plan outlined below.
- 9.5 As for a project plan, we recommend the following elements:
- Briefing: review of context and detailed requirements with ELWa, WMC, etc (say 2 weeks)
 - Produce first draft of possible tool structure and main elements: drawing on, in particular, New Management Standards, project specification (say 4 weeks)
 - Consult on first draft: sample of existing business support/ management development practitioners, SME representative bodies (say 2 weeks)

- Revise first draft; pilot second draft with sample of SMEs (say 4 weeks)
- Optionally, use second draft within companies for market research purposes to identify likely demand
- Revise to give third draft: electronic and paper versions required (3 weeks)
- Consult current business/ management development providers (possibly via focus groups): key issues – what further refinements to tool are required; how might it be integrated with existing services; how might it best lead on to practical activities; how might it best be promoted/ supported? (4 weeks)
- Finalise tool design; finalise marketing/ support plan
- Launch tool
- Support tool and follow-on activities: monitor takeup, customer feedback, action taken (continuing)
- Evaluate tool: particularly in terms of impact on business performance, enhanced leadership/ management skills (after, say, 12 months experience).

9.6 Promotion work with Wales' various groups of advisers, trainers, assessors and consultants would be essential. Promotion direct to SMEs ought to be encouraged too. As we have pointed out on many occasions, ensuring those undertaking the self-diagnostic exercise have access to excellent follow-on support needs to be guaranteed.

9.6 We have not addressed the question of 'ownership' of the tool, but a nominated organisation will have to take charge of tasks like printing and distributing the tool, keeping electronic versions up-to-date, ensuring copyrights are not infringed, etc. – and appropriate resources will have to be made available to ensure that this too is done well if the tool is not to fall into disrepute or disuse.