

Lothian Tourism  
Recruitment and  
Retention Programme:  
Evaluation 2002-04

Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh & Lothian

May 2004

# Lothian Tourism Recruitment and Retention Programme: Evaluation 2002-04

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# 1. Introduction

In September 2002, Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh and Lothian (SE Edinburgh & Lothian) subcontracted the delivery of their *Tourism Recruitment and Retention Action Plan* to Springboard Scotland (hereafter referred to as Springboard) on a two-year contract. This report has been prepared by Experian Business Strategies in order to evaluate the extent to which Springboard have fulfilled the targets they were set under the contract for the period to March 2004. It is worth noting that the targets for this initiative were set following the completion of the contract for the *Tourism Recruitment Initiative*, the predecessor of the current scheme which ended in August 2002. That was a completely new initiative which was managed by a single individual for one year, which was reflected in the relatively low targets for that work.<sup>1</sup> The targets for the current Springboard-run initiative partly reflect the targets set/achieved by that earlier work.

The targets for the *Tourism Recruitment and Retention Action Plan* are both qualitative and quantitative. As with any evaluation the following caveats apply. Firstly, there is an inherent difficulty in measuring the counter-factual i.e. what sort of improvement in these areas would be expected if Springboard were not carrying out the work? It is impossible to know this so our evaluation focuses purely on those outputs Springboard were commissioned to generate. Secondly, we acknowledge that in terms of meeting targets, e.g. getting SIP residents into work, the efforts of Springboard are just one factor, albeit a very important factor, in ensuring employment targets are met. Given these constraints we have focussed largely on the hard output targets set as part of the contract and supplemented these with analysis of Springboard's performance in terms of the broader aims set out in the initial contract.

The first part of the report evaluates Springboard against the quantitative (KMIS) targets. The report then summarises the findings of a small number of telephone interviews with stakeholders who have engaged with Springboard in some way in the past 18 months, in order to determine how successful they have been in meeting their more qualitative targets. The overall performance is discussed in the final section of the report.

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<sup>1</sup> *Lothian Tourism Recruitment Initiative, Year 1 Evaluation*, Experian Business Strategies for Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh & Lothian, August 2002

## 2. Targets

### 2.1 OVERVIEW

In September 2002, Springboard was contracted by SE Edinburgh & Lothian to deliver the tourism team's *Recruitment and Retention Action Plan* over a two-year period. This report reviews the period from September 2002 to March 2004. At the time the contract was issued, there were set four key priorities for the scheme:

- **Improving the operation of the Scottish labour market**
- **Ensuring the best start for all young people**
- **Narrowing the gap in unemployment**
- **Improving demand for high quality in work training**

In order to meet these priorities, a number of targets were set under each broad heading. In addition to these targets, Springboard was set a number of other more general targets unrelated to these priorities. These included the creation of a new tourism partnership initiative between Springboard and Careers Scotland, the creation of a "one stop shop" for training and education and a skills pipeline connecting employers with potential recruits.

Overall, a total of 23 targets were set out in the June 2003 board paper. Over the course of the September 2002 to March 2003 period, it became clear that whilst Springboard were achieving high returns in some areas, it was not clear how some of their other activities might fit into the output targets. Following discussion with SE Edinburgh & Lothian a new set of targets was agreed. These reflected the initial board paper outputs but also included a shorter set of 7 knowledge management (KMIS) targets. This report assesses Springboard's performance against the broad strategic priorities and the KMIS targets.

### 2.2 OUTPUTS

Some of Springboard's achievements, relative to the broad goals of the action plan include:

#### **Improving the operation of the Scottish labour market**

- Promoting Big Thistle.com – This had a promising start and Springboard was responsible for producing a wide range of promotional material which was distributed at careers fairs and other events. However, this has now been taken off line for commercial reasons outwith the control of Springboard and remains so at the time of writing this report.
- Providing career advice and guidance – A target of providing careers advice to 250 individuals was set and exceeded as 320 of this group were advised.
- Tourism careers events – Springboard have run a number of events including the Future chef week and the Discovery Trails.
- Work with tourism intermediaries – This has included work with organisations such as Jobcentre Plus, Careers Scotland and the Edinburgh Tourism Academy.
- Chair of ETAG sub-group looking at skills – This has been so successful that the Scottish Executive have proposed this is a model for other similar skills action groups in other industries.

### Ensuring the best start for all young people

- S2-S6 pupils taking part in the skills challenge/careers day/presentations, etc – This is an area in which Springboard are particularly strong. According to Springboard data they engaged with around 2249 school pupils over the 18-month period we are assessing. Some of the activities with schools have included tourism taster days, discovery trails, and skills challenges.

### Narrowing the gap in unemployment

- Supporting national programmes e.g. Training for Work, New Deal, Skillseekers – A proportion of this has been working with intermediaries such as Jobcentre Plus and Careers Scotland.
- Engaging long-term unemployed – Examples of Springboard’s work include presentation to the Edinburgh Cyrenians. Over the past 18 months Springboard estimate they have engaged with around 521 unemployed people through these initiatives.
- Widen the labour pool e.g. engaging with women returners - The proportion (relative to the unemployed) of these groups is relatively small, around 20 over 18 months.

### Improving demand for high quality in work training

- Training for young people in work for example, Ambassador training – This is one area which has seen a big increase in the last twelve months. The number of people engaged with Springboard on recruitment or training initiatives in the industry rose to 109 over the twelve months to March 2004 up from 13 in the previous six months. The specific numbers receiving Springboard manager or ambassador training in that period is not available separately.

## 2.3 KMIS TARGETS

### 2.3.1 Year 1 (September 02 – March 03)

During the September 2002 to March 2003 period Springboard were set a target of encouraging 40 unemployed adults to enter work based training and development activities. It is worth noting that the Year 1 targets were relatively low as they were derived in part from the earlier *Lothian Tourism Recruitment Initiative* (ending August 2002). This had lower targets which were set as a fair measure of the work of a one man team which had weaker industry partnership links (than Springboard) and a higher starting goal of awareness-raising to achieve. Consequently, and as a result of the additional resource offered by Springboard (with two dedicated staff instead of one) the current scheme’s Year 1 target was comfortably met, with 82 adults participating in such activities in the region over the 7-month period.

PERFORMANCE AGAINST KMIS TARGETS SEPTEMBER 2002 TO MARCH 2003		
Description	Target (operating plan)	Actual
Number participating in adult work based training and development activities	40	82
Number of business assists	0	21
Number of individuals attending events	0	612
Number of low paid staff with low level qualifications undertaking core skills development	0	26
Source: Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh & Lothian, Springboard		

No targets were set (in the original outputs required) for the number of businesses assisted, the number of individuals attending educational and promotional events, or the number of low paid staff with low qualifications undertaking core skills development. However, statistics were collected on these measures, as it was known that they would form part of the performance targets in the following year. Over the 7-month period, 21 businesses were assisted by Springboard, 612 individuals attended promotional and education events that the organisation organised, and 26 low paid staff with low level qualifications were given assistance in undertaking core skills development. In all of these cases, Springboard succeeded in fulfilling their target for the entire 2003/04 financial year within the first 7-month period.

### 2.3.2 Year 2 performance (April 03- March 04)

At the beginning of April 2003, a new, simplified set of performance targets (as outlined in the Amendment to Contract document) were introduced in order to measure the performance of Springboard in delivering the *Recruitment and Retention Action Plan*. These measure Springboard's performance against seven KMIS targets. The table below indicates that Springboard exceeded all targets by some margin.

PERFORMANCE AGAINST KMIS TARGETS APRIL 2003 TO MARCH 2004		
Description	Target (operating plan)	Actual
A. Number of leavers from adult training initiatives (non TfW) in employment after 3 months	10	73
B. Number of leavers from adult training initiatives (non TfW) in employment within 6 months	25	0
C. (i) Number of starts in adult training initiatives (non TfW and non adult MA)	50	375
C. (ii) Of which from SIP areas	5	241
D. Number of low paid staff with low level qualifications completing an agreed learning plan	20	92
E. Number of business assists	6	65
F. Number of individuals attending events	150	1,672
Source: Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh & Lothian, Springboard		

#### Number of leavers from adult training initiatives in employment after 3 months and 6 months

The first objective is to provide a training programme that will provide unemployed adults with all of the necessary skills needed to allow them to enter work in the tourism industry once they complete their course. In order to determine how effectively Springboard met this objective in the 2003/04 year, SE Edinburgh & Lothian set two targets. The first target was to ensure that 10 adult training initiative leavers find work within three month of completing their course. The second was to ensure that by the time 6 months had elapsed, this total would rise to 25.

Springboard's performance against these two measures was very strong. 73 leavers from adult training initiatives managed to find work within three months of course completion. There were no leavers recorded as gaining employment after 6 months as Springboard have indicated that all the people who have gone through their training tend to get jobs. Although this statistic may simply be a reflection of the organisation's success in the first three months, no data is currently available to indicate whether any of those accessing work in the first three months subsequently left employment before six months had past.

### **Number of starts in adult training initiatives**

A second objective of the recruitment and retention programme is to provide as many people as possible with the opportunity to develop industry specific skills and, in particular, to ensure that as many people from more deprived social backgrounds as possible have the opportunity to develop these skills. In order to meet this objective, SE Edinburgh & Lothian have set Springboard two targets. The first is for 50 people to start a course through the adult learning initiative, and the second is for 5 of these people to come from areas covered by the Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP).

The first of these targets was reached in May, only two months into the financial year and the outturn for the year as a whole was 375. The second target was reached even earlier, less than a month into the financial year. In total, 241 people from SIP areas began training, almost 50 times higher than the target set.

Springboard may have invested a higher proportion of their resources into promoting courses within SIP areas than initial expectations. In the 2003/04 year, over 60 per cent of all course entrants came from a SIP area. This compares with the 10 per cent rate that was implicitly assumed when their targets were set.

### **Number of low paid staff with low-level qualifications completing an agreed learning plan**

A third objective of the programme is to give support to businesses in the tourism industry, by helping low paid staff to complete their learning plans, and by promoting businesses as good places to work through schemes such as buddy days. The target for this variable was for 20 low paid staff with low-level qualifications to complete an agreed learning plan over the course of the year. Springboard got off to quite a slow start and by the end of October, only 17 learning plans had been completed. However, thanks to a very strong performance in the second half of the financial year, and particularly in March, when the Ambassadors training programme and the tourism learning journey courses took place, the target was eventually clearly exceeded by some margin.

### **Number of business assists**

The target here was for 6 businesses to receive assistance in promoting themselves to potential future staff. Springboard was very quick to meet their target of assisting 6 organisations in promoting their business to potential staff. Indeed 16 businesses were assisted in the first month alone, and in total 65 businesses were assisted.

### **Number of individuals attending events**

The final objective of the programme was to work towards maximising the long-term pool of potential workers in tourism, by promoting work in the tourism sector to as many schoolchildren as possible. To achieve this goal, Springboard were set a target of ensuring that 150 school children attended events promoting the industry. Thanks to a wide range of events, including school presentations, careers fairs, adopt an ambassador events, school trails, and a very successful promotion tied to the MTV awards ceremony that was staged in Edinburgh in November 2003, this target was easily met, and a total of 1,672 individuals attended events. Almost two thirds of these attendances (1,084) occurred during the months of November and December 2003, around the time of the MTV awards.

## 3. Stakeholder Perceptions

In order to gain an understanding of how successful Springboard have been in meeting the softer targets, for example raising awareness, telephone interviews were carried out with six stakeholders who have been working with Springboard in the last two years. Those interviewed included two employers from the hospitality industry, a teacher, and three intermediaries working to attract people into the sector. The contact names for the interviews were supplied by Springboard. Clearly this raises the potential for a biased response. The alternative would have been to choose the interviewees from a random sample of hospitality employers, intermediaries or schools in Lothian. However, given that this is a relatively new initiative and that our survey sample is relatively small anyway the danger would have been that we chose a number of stakeholders with no working relationship with Springboard, thereby defeating the purpose of this analysis. We recognise this as a potential bias but given Springboard's success on the hard targets, we are of the view that this is unlikely to make any substantial difference to the overall conclusion of this evaluation.

### 3.1 GENERAL AWARENESS

All of the stakeholders interviewed had a longstanding connection with Springboard, and had worked with them for at least a year. In all cases, Springboard's Edinburgh office was the main point of contact. Although there were instances where the interviewees began working with Springboard as a result of being directly approached by the organisation, the majority of stakeholders interviewed approached Springboard themselves, following a recommendation from a colleague or line manager. A number of the stakeholders interviewed were quite mobile in their work, and had moved into a new job during the past two years. However, Springboard appears to have been successful in maintaining contact with these individuals.

### 3.2 SUCCESS IN PARTNERSHIP

The involvement that the interviewees had with Springboard varied from individual to individual. Some were active participants in Springboard programmes, such as the ambassador programme, and the tourism skills forum. Another stakeholder used Springboard as a day-to-day point of contact providing help in giving careers advice. Others had worked with Springboard helping them to put on events.

The feedback that stakeholders gave on these activities was unanimously positive. One example of this positive feedback came was from someone involved in the interactive schools conference, which they described as "a huge success". Another example came from an employer who has employed two people as a result of Springboard schemes, including a member of accounts staff, and a member of the restaurant staff who has recently been promoted. An intermediary who uses Springboard as a day-to-day contact described them as "a tremendous asset".

All of the individuals questioned showed a strong willingness to work with Springboard on similar projects again. In general, most of the stakeholders interviewed appeared to have a good understanding of the various types of support offered by Springboard, and were quite willing to make use of those that were of relevance to their organisation in future. In most cases, the stakeholders were on first name terms with at least one member of the Springboard team, and used that individual as a regular point of contact. As a consequence, they felt comfortable about approaching Springboard with problems or ideas or seeking advice. The website was also identified as a good source of information about Springboard activities.



Although most of the individuals questioned had worked with Springboard on a variety of different projects, they were generally enthusiastic about the prospect of trying out new ideas and working with Springboard in different ways in future. One participant who said that they were unlikely to participate in certain Springboard schemes in future indicated that a lack of budgets or time were the reasons for this. All of the stakeholders interviewed showed a willingness to recommend Springboard to other colleagues or peers, and some had done so in the past. This is not surprising given that many of the stakeholders had themselves first approach Springboard following a colleague's recommendation.

### **3.3 PERFORMANCE AGAINST KEY PRIORITIES**

In September 2002, Springboard was contracted by SE Edinburgh & Lothian to deliver the tourism team's *Recruitment and Retention Action Plan* over a two-year period. There were four key priorities set:

- Improving the operation of the Scottish labour market
- Ensuring the best start for all young people
- Narrowing the gap in unemployment
- Improving demand for high quality in work training

During the interviews with stakeholders, we asked how successful Springboard was in meeting these four objectives.

#### **Improving the operation of the Scottish labour market**

We asked how successful Springboard have been in raising the profile of the tourism sector in Edinburgh and Lothian and how successful have they been at helping other organisations to network with each other.

In response to the first question, all of those questioned shared the view that Springboard were very good at raising their profile and promoting Springboard and the employers it represents to a variety of intermediaries and educational establishments. Springboard also appear to have been very successful at raising awareness of the variety of career opportunities in the sector, particularly skilled posts, letting potential workers know that there was, in the words of one respondent, "more to the industry than being a kitchen porter".

They were also complimented on the enthusiasm with which they carried out their activities, with one respondent saying that "their enthusiasm for the industry is infectious" and that, as a consequence, they manage to give a very positive impression of what work in the sector is like. When asked whether they believed that Springboard had succeeded in helping people in the industry to network with one another, all of the respondents agreed that they had. As an example, one of the interviewees said that from a personal point of view, they had certainly made more regular contact with other hoteliers as a result of co-operation with Springboard.

One of the biggest contributing factors towards the increase in networking was the tourism skills forum, which was singled out by a number of respondents for praise. The newsletters were also thought to make a strong contribution.

#### **Ensuring the best start for all young people**

The individual interviewed shared the view that Springboard had done a very successful job of making young people aware of opportunities in the tourism and hospitality sector, and giving advice on the skills needed to fulfil these roles. The Ambassador programme was identified by a number of these respondents as a good vehicle for this. One of the intermediaries questioned

suggested that one of the positive outcomes of Springboard's engagement with young people is that they help to give them confidence in their own abilities, a factor which he considered to be vital to the success of those individuals. The two employers questioned also shared the view that Springboard was very good at promoting the industry to young people, and could both think of instances of young people finding employment in their organisation as a result of Springboard activities.

### **Narrowing the gap in unemployment**

The six stakeholders questioned were asked to what extent they felt that Springboard had managed to provide new employment and training opportunities to the following four groups:

- People who live in disadvantaged areas
- Women wishing to return to work
- People over the age of 50
- The long term unemployed

All the respondents believed that Springboard had been successful in helping these groups. Part of the reason given for this success was the fact that Springboard have managed to make themselves known to, and provided support for, a wide range of intermediaries with interests in helping these groups. Anecdotal examples that were given of such success include the example of a 63-year old woman, who found employment as a result of the work of one of the intermediaries who was supported by Springboard. Other examples of successes came from one of the employers we questioned, who had recently recruited two members of staff that were previously long-term unemployed. The view was that Springboard did a successful job in keeping the employer well informed of the progress made in treating the individual, and provided advice on how best to accommodate her condition.

However, one of the employers interviewed said that the hospitality academies were less successful in making long term unemployed people work ready than had been hoped. The interviewee did not believe that this lack of success was the fault of Springboard and instead blamed the low unemployment rate in Edinburgh for the poor performance, arguing that many of the participants in the scheme were unmotivated with the benefits trap also a contributing factor to this problem. The interviewee suggested that if the scheme had been tried five or six years ago it would have been more successful. One of the interviewees identified the organisation's willingness to seek long-term solutions to an individual's problems, instead of quick fixes, as one of the body's key strengths in helping these groups. None of those questioned believed that Springboard had particularly singled out any of these groups for additional support. Rather they believed that Springboard offered equal help and support to all individuals and they suggested that this was the right approach to take.

### **Improving demand for high quality in work training**

The majority of the individuals we asked were either unsure as to whether this objective had been met, or believed that it was too early to say whether it had been met. To a large extent, this result may simply be due to that sample of people we interviewed, as only two of the six individuals interviewed were employers in the tourism sector. However, it may also be the case that it is on this issue where Springboard have the greatest scope for increase activity. However, awareness of the projects undertaken by Springboard aimed at tackling this objective was high, and the Ambassadors scheme was identified as a good development tool, particularly as it increases staff confidence.

### 3.4 CONTRIBUTION MADE TO SE EDINBURGH & LOTHIAN'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

In the June 2002 Board Paper for Approval, SE Edinburgh & Lothian set out three strategic objectives, which were all in line with the 3 overall objectives of *A Smart, Successful Scotland*. These were:

- **Growing Businesses:** to grow tourism businesses, encouraging innovative and far sighted behaviours and practical collaboration;
- **Skills and Learning:** to create an inclusive industry renowned for its skills and levels of excellence; and;
- **Global Connections;** to ensure that the Lothian's tourism product is internationally competitive.

The six stakeholders we interviewed were all asked how successful they believe Springboard were at meeting these three general objectives.

#### **Growing Businesses**

Although all of the respondents believe that Springboard have made a significant contribution towards this goal, the broad feeling was that they alone are unable to meet this objective, and that it is the shared responsibility of all the organisations in the tourism sector to do this. One stakeholder identified the industry background of the manager of Scottish Springboard as a factor which would help this goal to be met.

#### **Skills and Learning**

Although a number of respondents felt unable to answer this question, due their organisation's lack of involvement with people actually working in the industry, those who responded generally felt that Springboard's work did have a positive impact. The Ambassadors scheme and a recent communications training programme targeted at inexperienced supervisors were mentioned as successful projects against this objective.

#### **Global Connections**

Again, not everyone interviewed felt in a position to respond to this question. However, most of those who did tended to take a positive view. Recruitment difficulties and low levels of confidence among recruits and potential recruits were identified as two of the factors responsible for limiting the competitiveness of the Edinburgh and Lothian hospitality sector, and there was a view that the entire sector, and not just Springboard, had a role in resolving these difficulties. However, it was agreed that Springboard had made a start on addressing these issues, and was contributing to the overall objective. The one exception came from one of the employers who argued that there was little evidence to suggest that Springboard had contributed in a major way to this goal, although he also argued that this was probably a positive thing, indicating it is important for Springboard to focus on the job at hand, rather than focusing on overly hypothetical and overly global targets.

It was pointed out that Springboard have only been working in the Edinburgh area for quite a short time, and were still going through the process of establishing their presence in the area. One respondent argued that word of mouth would have a positive impact once Springboard are widely seen to be generating long term results for people, and as a result Springboard's influence will accelerate. The same respondent argued that, providing that they receive sufficient support, Springboard have "the right ideas and the right attitude" to make a lasting contribution to this objective.

## 4. Evaluating the overall impact

### 3.5 OVERALL IMPACT

The outcome of this evaluation has been very positive in favour of Springboard Scotland. They have comfortably exceeded their revised targets for the past eighteen months (October 02 to March 04) in every area (even allowing for the issues around the target setting process raised earlier in this report). The primary research also indicated that as far as their prime customer groups are concerned Springboard's performance against the softer targets has also been good. This has been achieved in the context of a relatively tight Lothian labour market which may have helped Springboard achieve some of their aims. Even allowing for this and the possibility of a positive bias in the primary research, the overwhelming evidence is that Springboard have successfully met and exceeded the terms of their contract. Particular areas of success include:

- Organising and running events, particularly with partner organisations e.g. the MTV web-based competition and interactive schools career day
- Improving networking within the industry and becoming a single point of call for Lothian-based organisations looking for tourism skills or recruitment information
- Raising awareness of the tourism industry
- Adult starts into training initiatives, particularly from SIP areas and high employment rates for those leaving adult training initiatives

### 3.6 FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

There seems to be a strong case for suggesting that Springboard continue to be funded in its current role not least because the coming period will reap the benefits of the groundwork already carried out. If this is the case, you may wish to consider the following:

- Revising the targets – Although the actual targets themselves have been agreed and appear appropriate for what is being measured (and in part were based on an earlier less established scheme), it is likely that SE Edinburgh & Lothian would want to set more ambitious targets in future, given how comfortably they have been exceeded so far. Furthermore, you may wish to add sub-targets under some of the headings, for example, specifying the number of disabled recruits to be targeted.
- New FSS – The context and priorities for Springboard's work will continue to change depending on the industry's needs. The new Future Skills Scotland employer survey due out Summer 2004 may give some indication of whether the balance of priorities needs to shift in favour of recruitment, retention or workforce development.
- Engaging with disadvantage adults - one area where interviewees felt Springboard were successful but not overly concentrating their efforts is working with disadvantaged adults. However, the hard data suggest that Springboard is making inroads here with 241 adult starts into training initiatives from SIP areas in the last year alone. What Springboard's data also indicates that these were mostly unemployed people rather than for example career changers or women returners. Although a smaller niche to target and therefore more of a challenge, perhaps more effort might be targeted specifically at these groups in the future.
- Finally, it is not clear from the evidence considered in this report alone, whether it is mainly large employers in the Lothian's who are currently benefiting from Springboard's efforts. A medium term aim might therefore be to ensure that more small or medium sized employers are also being targeted.